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# SCHOLARS OF CHRIST

*A BOOK FOR ADVANCING CHRISTIANS*

BY

SAMUEL PEARSON, M.A.

AUTHOR OF "FIRST STEPS TO GOD," "WEEK-DAY LIVING," ETC.

412

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1895



## P R E F A C E .

THE desire to reach a lofty ideal of the Christian life prevails in many hearts, and is one of the most hopeful signs of our day. The "return to Christ," as it is called, is not so much a theological as a religious movement. It manifests itself in works which are Christ-like, in an intense desire to know Christ's will, and in a daring faith which seeks to appropriate the virtue which comes out of Him. The *practical* and *mystical* sides of Christianity have been pushed to the forefront; enthusiasts hold the flag, and the lukewarm are in danger of being left behind. What we need in the individual is an all-round development of spiritual and moral strength, and in the Christianized society a general advance toward new positions. Practical religion, when divorced from the spiritual

impetus given by Evangelical facts, is apt to come to a standstill, like a slip carriage when it is loosened from the express train ; and mysticism may degenerate into a luxurious picnic in a sub-tropical climate of ecstatic emotion, unless it embodies itself in the usefulness of "the daily round and common task." It must not be supposed that we deny the value of the modern movement in favour of "social Christianity" when we still take our abode near the Cross, nor must we be accused of minimizing the importance of the "life of faith" when we insist that faith without the works of home cheerfulness and business integrity is "dead, being alone."

No one can thoughtfully watch modern religious movements without some anxiety. Few of us can see more than a segment of the great circle of truth ; but if we insist that the part is equal to the whole, we shall mislead others and weaken ourselves. My strongest sympathies are with those who are working at the outside of man's sorrowful condition, and my heart is fed by the outpourings of those mystical writers who have found the springs of real life in the citadel of

man's love where God alone can dwell. It should be possible in some degree to combine both these tendencies, and to produce in human character by God's Spirit a well-rounded manhood in Christ Jesus. To take the good and leave the doubtful in the teachings which are put before us tends both to charity and to growth. I have attempted to pursue this course in these pages, and in the preparation of them I have been indebted to many writers of various schools of thought. All I can hope is, that a few lines of truth are suggested which may help the reader to be a more diligent scholar of the Divine Teacher, and I may add that I am encouraged to cherish this expectation by the favour with which a few of the chapters were received when they appeared last year in the *Evangelical Magazine*. These papers are, by the kind permission of its editor, embodied in this book.

SAMUEL PEARSON.

BROUGHTON PARK, MANCHESTER,  
*July 25, 1895.*





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# SPIRITUAL LESSONS:

## I.

### THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.



# SCHOLARS OF CHRIST



## CHAPTER I.

### THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

WE have to take for granted the presence of sin in our hearts. It will not help us to inquire too curiously as to how it found a lodgment there. The more practical question is to seek to know how it is to be got rid of. Men want to know how they are to be forgiven.

The existence of sin is always taken for granted, but it is not always felt by us. In fact, it seems to need a special revelation of God to bring it home to our minds. Hence Paul makes the startling announcement that the law was given that grace might abound. He explains this by saying that by the law was given the knowledge of sin. With this there must also be the

knowledge of God Himself, otherwise we do not see that our sin is directed against a Divine Person. And as it is only a Person who can forgive, we need to see that the transgression was in the first instance directed against the God of love. If there be a God it is of the highest consequence that we should know what He thinks of us, for apart from His power, which will enable Him to do what He pleases with us, He is also the perfect Being of the universe. It must, therefore, be of the first importance that we who are made by Him in His own likeness should get to know whether we shall be fit to live with Him here and hereafter. The forgiveness of sins comes to us from a forgiving God. It is ensured to us by the death of Christ. It is to be sought by repentance and faith in Christ as our Saviour. In other words: 1. Its source is in God; 2. Its pledge is in Christ; 3. Its condition is in man's faith.

#### I. THE ORIGIN OF PARDON IS IN GOD'S OWN NATURE.

There are wonderful passages in the Scriptures which go to show this. And such passages reveal to us much of the inner nature of the Divine Being. When men want to know why the Bible is inspired, we can point to this great characteristic of its pages, and let them see how remarkably it

tells us exactly what we want to know about the greatest Being in the universe.

The Biblical idea of God is that it is His nature to pardon ; not, as we sometimes think, that He requires to be persuaded to forgive His creatures. Rather is the other view the prominent one, viz. that it is His delight to bestow holiness in its initial stages on His creatures. And it is this idea which we need to seize if we are to make right approaches to Him as to our Father in heaven. Some seem to regard the work of Christ as consisting in getting God the Father into a pardoning mood, whereas it is His prerogative to show us what is in the heart of God, and what has been there from the very beginning of human history. How beautiful, then, must the sight of God be to beings who can get a real glimpse of His true nature ! It is such a view which encourages us to come constantly with all our many sins and infirmities into the Divine Presence that we may receive from God the grace which we so much need.

But how often men are found staying away from God's presence, not necessarily because they want still to cling to their sins, but rather because they are afraid to confess to a holy Being what they know themselves to be ! But the great miracle of



grace is that God invites sinners to come near Him. He is accessible, not alone to angels who have never fallen, but also to those whose natures have been tainted with the thing which He hates and abhors.

There must, then, be at the heart of God a great love for men when this is the case. And it is a love which we can only interpret in the terms of fatherhood. It is because we are His children by our very constitution that He thus yearns to have us near Him even in our very sins. He cannot bear that we should be in loneliness and exile away from Him, the Source of all our true happiness and well-being. Therefore He invites us near Him and also asks our confidence.

And the proof of all this is not only found in the Scriptures, but there is a clearer evidence, even that which is given to our own experience; for the more we approach God, the more do we see how good He is to those who seek His face. It is only those who give up prayer, and who leave off those exercises of faith which bring us into communion with God, who get to doubt His power to forgive. There is a long line of testimony on the part of those who have sought His face, which ought to convince us that God is truly loving. Indeed, this constitutes much of the value of the

Bible. It is written by those who in their very souls had a knowledge that God was full of love and holiness, and who wrote, therefore, out of the fulness of that experience. They stand, consequently, on a similar platform with ourselves when they testify of the great grace of God. What they felt we, too, may also feel.

## II. THE ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS IS IN CHRIST JESUS.

The human heart seems to ask some tangible proof from God that He is indeed prepared to wash our sins away. In fact, what men wish is to see God Himself with a nearer vision. God seems to our weak sight to be afar off, and it is our earnest desire to know Him and to feel that He does indeed take an interest in our well-being. This desire, implanted by God Himself, is met by the Incarnation. But there is another also. It is that our consciences, which are in very deed the voice of God within the soul, may receive some assurance that the law of right has been respected in the love which is to be manifested by our being pardoned for the thing which God hates. How is this need to be met? It is sometimes said that all that God has to do is to show His heart to us. But his love must necessarily be made plain in a life, and that life must be itself Divine, or else it

could not show God to us ; and it must be human, or else it could not be understood by us. It must be a life at once most holy, and yet it must be a life which comes into contact with the sin which God hates. Sin makes us suffer ; it brings spiritual and often temporal death in its train. We should, therefore, very narrowly scan a life to see whether it remained holy, and whether it in any way came beneath the scourge of sin which we have to suffer. Something like this passes in every heart that desires reconciliation with a holy God. The man looks out of himself to see whether God can really help him at his sore need. He finds himself laden with guilt and cast down with its heavy memories, and he wants to meet with One who can relieve him of this terrible load of sin. Who can do it ? There is One. On Him help is laid. He is both able and willing to hold out a saving hand to all who call upon Him.

But we are not left to the mere surmisings of our own hearts in this matter. We know that Christ has died. How is that death to be regarded ? As God's contact with sin. It enabled God to give pardon to men ; not, indeed, that God had to wait till Christ had died before He was able to give man what he wanted, for from all eternity there was in the nature of God the

purpose and plan to bless man. And this included necessarily the forgiveness of man's sins. Everything good exists in the very nature of God before it becomes manifest in time and in action. Thus the worlds of life and beauty which we see round us existed in God before they were in the realms of space. So also it is with the cross of Christ. That, too, also was in the very being of God from all eternity before it could possibly be manifested to us sinners. Christ was "the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world."

Here, again, we have a proof of its efficacy to pardon, not in the schemes of theologians, but rather in the experience of all those who have put their trust in Christ as their Saviour. Nothing is more certain in the spiritual realm than that Christ does forgive by the efficacy of His cross all repented sin, for we have the experience of human life at its best to testify to the fact. Here we are not left to the mere theorizer; but we appeal to all those who have been conscious of the saddest fact in their existence, and who have the courage to put themselves in the hands of Christ, and these with one acclaim crown Christ Lord of all. If feelings and experiences are any better than mere dreams, we certainly stand upon a rock of certainty in thus appealing to the

common-sense of all spiritual men who may be classed as believers. Science insists on having facts to build its conclusions upon. We do the same in constructing a science of salvation. Here we listen to what the faithful tell us.

### III. THE CONDITION OF FORGIVENESS IS MAN'S FAITH.

We argue rightly from God's nature that all men may be forgiven. He is the Father of all. But we argue wrongly if we say, therefore, that all men *are* forgiven. That mysterious power, which we call free will, makes it necessary for man to co-operate with God before the rich gifts of His grace can become our real possession. So that while it is God's will that all men should be saved, that will is clearly conditioned by the fact that He has Himself made all men capable of either refusing or accepting His great love. If, then, any stand outside His home in deliberate refusal of His grace, they are to all intents and purposes not His children. There are still, thank God, the possibilities of sonship sleeping within them; but no benefit accrues to them from this fact, and they do not obtain the blessings of the home life. They are aliens, and choose still to remain in darkness. It is the question of questions with us all as to how this alienation is to be removed, for without

God we must inevitably be without hope and real happiness.

Faith is the return of the soul of man to the confidence and fellowship of the Father who has lost us, but who has never ceased to love and follow us. And we may say that the whole of our life is one long persuasion on the part of God to bring us to a right mind. This is the reason of many things which seem strange, and even cruel, in our lot. They take us out of self; they often show us that our own way is a way of death; and thus they remind us of that great love which all the time has been unweariedly and patiently waiting for a response from our dull hearts. The return on our part must necessarily in some measure be one of sorrow, for we cannot remember our long obstinacy without much grief and pain. Our sorrow over our sin cannot be deep enough, for it is impossible for us to see what a great blot and crime human sin is. Only perfectly holy beings can know what a grievous thing sin is. Our sensibilities have been too much blunted for us to see what transgression of a holy law, given by a loving Father, must mean. But we do catch glimpses enough of that far-off holiness to see that sin must not be made light of, and that the first thing that we need in coming to God is that our

sin should be forgiven. But in order to this men must *seek* God's forgiveness.

It is true that there is an *offer* of love in the Gospel ; but there is also to be the search after God on our part. It is in order that there may be this search that we have been endowed with that power of free choice of which we have spoken. And it is only as our search is earnest that we can realize the greatness and perfection of God's pardon. So long as we only wish in some languid way for the gift it will never become ours. Some deep desire must be stirred within us. The fountains of the nature must be broken up. The great ice-fields which have grown over the soul must melt with the new desires of a coming spring, and then the river of God's pleasure will begin to flow through the spirit.

That this must be so will be seen if we remember that pardon is not a mechanical thing which can be bestowed on a man against his will, as you could wrap him round with a coat whether he asked for it or not. It is a spiritual thing which must be received by the mind in the exercise of its thought, and by the heart in the exercise of its trust. For our religion is a relation between one Person and another. It binds the individual man to the Personal God. And the difficulty of

realizing it comes from the fact that it is so hard for us to find such a Being as the Invisible God. But this difficulty is removed by God Himself when He comes to us in the Person of His Son Jesus Christ. In Jesus we see God. He touches us at all points of our nature because He Himself became man. If we want the physical in us influenced, then we can through history actually see Christ, for those who were the contemporaries of our Lord acted on our behalf when they saw the Lord. They became witnesses of His life both before and after His resurrection. Thus their vision of Christ becomes ours, and through them we, too, see the Lord. But it is a nearer and a more penetrating vision which we need to have, and this is given us, as we feel that in all the mysterious struggle of our soul we are perfectly understood by Jesus, because He Himself went through all our bitter and blessed experience. It is thus that God evokes trust from our natures and leads us to seek the face, not of a distant being whom we cannot understand, but of One who is very close to us in all the joys and sorrows of our mortal lot.

What shall we say to these things? The theme must necessarily awaken serious questions in our minds. Are we sinners? Have our sins been



blotted out by God Himself? How do we know this? Have we looked to the Atoning Sacrifice of Christ to assure our hearts that this is indeed so? Have we the assurance brought by an outward life changed by the great grace of God, and the inward assurance born in us by God's Spirit witnessing that we have the same love in our hearts as is in the heart of God? These are solemn and searching questions: on the answer to them depends what we are to be in this life and in that which awaits us beyond the grave. It is therefore high time that in lonely prayer we tried to settle this matter between our own souls and God. Let our own great need and His infinite and tender love persuade us to do this and to do it now.

## II.

CONSTANT CONSECRATION.



## CHAPTER II.

### CONSTANT CONSECRATION.

TO consecrate was to set apart for holy uses. In heathen times it referred to places, to things material, and to a special class of men. But with the introduction of Christianity, God, in His personal relations, is most prominently brought before our minds. And our first thought has now to be what will be well pleasing to Him; and this again leads us to ask, What is His nature? According to our convictions as to His character will be our views as to the subject of consecration. If we have a remnant of old Pagan error clinging to us we shall think very much of places and of special times, and suppose that by their proper use we shall be able to approve ourselves to the Most High. But if we accept the conception of God's Fatherhood, which is central to the Gospel, we shall regard all outward things as subordinate parts of our discipline. They will be our servants

and never our masters. Moreover, the thought of the Divine spirituality will come to our aid, and we shall find ourselves able to approach God, not only in a filial spirit, but in all the common as well as uncommon circumstances of our lot.

The main thing, then, is to get a true idea of God, and one which will help us to live near to Him. How is this to be done? If we think of it as easy we shall not attain to it. For the essence of the Deity must necessarily be a very complex one; and, therefore, it is only the gradual development of life with its joys and sorrows which can enable us to catch glimpses of its many-sidedness. We have to wait for the new revelations which, if only we are patient, childlike, and trustful, will assuredly be given us.

Then, secondly, we have to get a clear idea of the nature of the tie which binds us to God. For without this we shall neither begin nor proceed well in the spiritual life. Now, Scripture tells us that it is by faith that we please God. Faith is both an intellectual and a will faculty. And the two sides of its operation cannot be safely separated from each other. It is both necessary to believe with the mind through the understanding, and also with the will through the affections. If we leave out the first, we become mere

sentimentalists ; if we leave out the second, we become mere dogmatists.

Let us now go back to our first point, and we shall see that God's character is fully revealed to us in Christ Jesus. We cannot be Christians apart from Him ; we cannot, as it were, get behind Christ at God, but we must go to God through Him. The spiritual life is likely to be strongest in that man who has the deepest and clearest knowledge of Christ. This is not as simple as it may appear at first. For if, as we believe, Christ was God manifest in the flesh, we feel that our best knowledge must ever fall far short of the reality.

All this may seem a very hard task to the ordinary Christian ; for he may think that clear ideas of his Lord can only be obtained by the professed theologian. But it still remains true that these things are revealed to babes while often they are hidden from the wise and prudent. And the reason is evident : for it is a knowledge which comes to the soul much as the knowledge of the child is dropped into its heart by the loving ministries of its parent. We see this done by the mother in a thousand undefined ways, which are yet most effectual. And the knowledge at length grows to be a most intimate one on both sides.

The same process goes on between the spirit of man and his Saviour. Hence we see utterances in Rutherford's letters which savour of great ecstacy, and which we could hardly ourselves use, but which we instinctively feel to have been perfectly natural in his case. Our own language must not be allowed to run before our experience except for the purposes of inspiration, or otherwise we shall slip into unconscious hypocrisy. But still we can easily discern that the great principle of the Christian life is that of love. The man who loves best is the best Christian. And this love is called out by a clear conception of Christ's love to us. So that there is room both for the exercise of the understanding and of the heart.

But when love is formed in the soul it takes one of two directions ; or, better still, it partakes of two characteristics. It may be either emotional or practical, or both. It is easier to be emotional than to be practical ; and hence this form is the more common amongst those who want to practise the art of constant consecration. But the excesses of emotional religion ought not to make us despise the function of feeling in the culture of the religious life. Many, especially men, become very hard in their views of the subject, and they altogether forget the place which enthusiasm has had in

the reformation of souls and of society. We have been made to feel keenly ; and he who has lost the power of feeling, and who is no longer moved to tears at the thought of his Saviour's sufferings, has degenerated from a higher to a lower type of the Christian life. Conventions for the purpose of generating and sustaining these lofty emotions are a clear gain in the midst of a busy, competitive age like our own. What are our Sunday services but gatherings for this very purpose ? Especially is this true of our assemblings around the Table of the Lord. There a direct appeal is made to our senses so that our hearts may be touched. But it is clear that we cannot stay on the mount always. The three tabernacles are no sooner built in the imagination of Peter, than the Apostles find that they must hasten to a case of demoniacal possession. The inspiration is received on the top of the mountain of lonely contact with God ; but the duty has to be performed on the plain beneath.

This is our case. Did consecration cease when the three Apostles left off beholding the wondrous glory ? No ! it then began in terrible reality, when they found themselves confronted with a demon who could only be cast out by much prayer. We conclude, then, that the hardest part



of consecration is that which has to go on amid the daily duties and trials of life. If these are regarded as interruptions to our communion, instead of, what they really are, means of fellowship with the Self-sacrificing Christ, we have fallen into one of the most dangerous heresies. We are turning life into a series of pools which may become stagnant, whereas it ought to be a clear flowing stream. Christianity has given a death-blow at all aristocracies ; it invites all men into its ample fold of light and truth, whatever their position and calling. When, then, we think of any duties as merely secular, and as things that may be done without the Divine cognizance or sanction, we are allowing the thin edge of atheism to be put into our life.

It should be a serious question with us every day as to how we may live our ordinary life in the presence of God. The strong belief that it is appointed us by God Himself is a part of the consecration to which we are called. If we let that belief slide out of our hearts we are on the highway to a separation of ourselves from the Divine Being. It is not the work but the Master that makes life a Divine thing. Instead of sinking to the level of our labour, we should seek to rise to the height of Him who commands us ; and then,

assuredly, there would be the dignity of true priests about us at all times. We have not yet eradicated from our minds the idea that only sacred persons, so called, can do work for God. But the labour which our first parents were told by the Divine Being to do was not what we should call sacred, for it consisted in keeping a garden in order. Yet it was in reality sacred. The old Manichean error, that there is something inherently sinful in mere matter, still in a measure clings to us; but by the Incarnation, in virtue of which the Word Himself became Flesh, we are reminded that the spiritual blends with the material, and is intended to operate through it. Let us, then, proclaim the truth on the housetop, that nothing to which we can honestly put our hands is common or unclean in the sight of God. That will at once purify the will and give us the only true idea of consecration. There are different kinds of work, as there are coins of distinct and separate value; but all may bear the same Divine stamp, and be issued from the same heavenly mint.

One criterion should guide us as to whether the service in which we are engaged is of the right order; it is its usefulness. A life spent in wronging men, in doing them harm, in demoralizing

their souls or bodies, in preventing their progress, cannot be by any possibility a life of real consecration. Legislators, writers, public speakers, preachers, teachers, soldiers, tradesmen, and others who are not helping to make others happier are in reality hindering the progress of the race, and in the highest light they will come one day to see that their days on earth have been so many curses. The intention may have been good ; but we know what place is paved with the square sets of good intentions. The wood, hay, and stubble will be burned up when the Son of Man appears and brings every work into judgment.

But there comes another principle into play : it is as to whether we are aiming at the best in our life. Many are able not only to say that they have done no harm, but that they have done, and are doing, positive good ; but we cannot say of them that they are doing the very best with their opportunities and talents. Their money does not flow in the best channel. They spend more on luxuries than on the kingdom which they profess to love with all their heart. Their education is good, but its effects are not felt in the Sunday school. Their business capacity is undoubted, but the great work of Christ is never benefited by their gift. Their children are very amiable ; but

they are not the families where we look for the heroes of the missionary field. It is evident that the idea that they are called to be like Christ has never crossed their minds. They are satisfied with the low levels of living; and the doctrine of consecration is one which needs to be put very persuasively before them, both as a matter of duty, and as one of the deepest joy. How much they miss in their march through the world they do not know; and it is only some heavenly vision of love Divine that can possibly awaken them to the glorious possibilities of the sons of God.

It will be seen from all these considerations what need there is for watchful vigilance on our part. And not only for vigilance, but for faith, prayer, activity, submission and meditation. These require daily exercise if the business of the soul is to be duly attended to. Some experience a crisis in their history not unlike conversion, in its suddenness, and in the overwhelming joy which it brings. It is a great mistake for those who have this experience to suppose that it must necessarily mark the life of every Christian. The Spirit works variously in different people. Mr. Moule, who has, I think, been prominent in teaching the "Higher Life," does not believe that there is any such revelation of a law as to a

crisis in sanctification as in the case of justification. Indeed, every careful student of words, and of the New Testament, must see that sanctification is in its essence a process. And it is altogether a perilous thing to fasten the attention on the crises and turning-points of the spiritual life so frequently that we are led to forget the long reaches of road which we have to tread between. Nor, again, is it a safe and healthy thing to fix upon one spiritual exercise like that of faith to the exclusion of all the others. If we use the word faith as it is often employed in Scripture to designate the whole round of the exercises to which the Christian is called, there can be no objection to speaking of the Christian course as a "life of faith." But it must be clearly borne in mind that this is to include such duties as prayer, watching over our thoughts and tempers, attending punctually upon the means of grace, reading the Scriptures, not merely as a devotional treatise, but as the history of God's revelation of Himself to our world, and the doing of those thousand and one things which make up our "daily round."

The reader will observe that we use the phrase "constant consecration" rather than that of "entire consecration." Constancy is one of the most valuable qualities of the character ; and it is no

less so when it enters into our relations with God Himself. He does not care for those who only love Him by fits and starts. On the contrary, the man whom He loves and in whom He delights is the one who brings forth fruit in his season. There should be no spasms in the life and plan of the sanctified man. But all should go on smoothly like the slow but glorious growth of the giant trees of California. The influences of His grace are constant; why should it not be so with the responses of the human heart? We have to watch ourselves that it may be so; for this regularity is a matter of habit induced by carefulness on our part. The awakened man always has the tendency of sleep within him, and unless he keeps himself aroused, he will sink back into a condition of spiritual lethargy. One of the things which Christian people find most difficult is to keep at the same work year in and year out. They find that change is easier than constancy. And as we survey a bit of Christian labour, we shall be surprised to see how few workers are found at the same post after the lapse of twenty years. It requires heroism of a special character to persevere at common things for the Master's sake. Hence there is always a kind of spurious popularity in new things. There is a fashion in thought

and in work as there is in dress. And he is the wise man who tries to find out what are the best principles on which to live his life, and who then determines to let the fashions come and go while he presses forward on the plain pathway of duty, which after all mutations leads to eternal glory. "He that endureth to the end shall be saved." The completeness of consecration is guaranteed by its endurance.

### III.

## CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.





## CHAPTER III.

### CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

IF we turn to Young's "Analytical Concordance," we shall find that to the word perfect there are given fourteen different shades of meaning. It is not, therefore, easy in any given passage to say what the exact sense of the writer is. This can only be gathered from the circumstances under which it was written, or from the character to whom it refers. When, for example, we are told that Asa or David had a perfect heart, we know at once that this does not mean that they were perfect men, or even that they lived always up to the light that was given them. And when we try to see what is positively meant by such words, we find that they are synonymous in many cases with COMPLETION, SINCERITY, INTEGRITY, or MATURITY. Sometimes with one more than with another; and sometimes the word "perfect" seems a blending of all shades of meaning.

The commands of Scripture are given to men ; and men are not, as we know, sinless. In order to be morally perfect a man must be at least free from sin ; but this is a condition in which we never find any fallen creature. Nor does regeneration remove all the sin from the nature ; what it does is to introduce a higher life which contends with, and at length overcomes, the lower. It is sometimes said that God could, if He wished, make a soul instantaneously holy. But it is forgotten that God limits Himself—or rather limits His actions—when He allows a finite being to be the subject of His operation. We plunge into obscurity of thought, from which there seems no extrication, when we say that God can alter the constitution of things which it has pleased Him to lay down. When God works on man He works according to the law of man's nature, and not according to that of an angel. We can easily bring this to a concrete test, for there was One who was perfect Man in that He had no sin. As a Man, apart from His Divinity, Christ was perfect. There is here no question as to relative or absolute perfection, but as a matter of actual fact and history, we have a specimen of what sinless perfection is in the character of our Lord. Has, then, any other man come up to His standard? We know

well that no one has ever done so. The testimony of the best men and women who have drunk His Spirit is always that they have all through their course lagged far behind the peerless virtues of Jesus. In all that makes moral perfection He stands absolutely alone.

It is necessary that we should carefully guard ourselves against mistake on this point, for history shows us that many have supposed that a positive, perfection, free from all stain of self and sin, has been attained by the soul, and that this freedom from sin was given in an instant through the special gift of the Holy Spirit. Instances are quoted from the life of the early Church to show that the disciples had a power granted to them after conversion which of course is evident; but it is forgotten that this power was not necessarily that of perfection. It was a power which enabled them to see truth more clearly, and to live in close fellowship with the risen Saviour, and as such it is one to be sought by us all. The Spirit gave them insight into truth which they had only dimly seen before, and also faith enabling them to overcome difficulties which had seemed to be insurmountable. In essence this will be our power now if we ask for the self-same gift of the Holy Ghost; but the manifestations will be different, in

accordance with the changed conditions of the times in which we live.

The idea that a soul can be made perfect, in the sense of being sinless, in a moment of time has led to fearful consequences in some cases ; though happily in most instances it is so guarded by other truths and by the conditions of life as to be an aid to faith instead of a hindrance. But in the history of some of the Mystics we see that it induced a want of watchfulness and an absence of the sense of personal responsibility which were positively destructive of the moral life. If all could be done by the Spirit of God, why should saints trouble as to outward conduct? Such was the implied argument, and it led to ruin. In other cases, when it is discovered that a mistake has been made, and there is the rude awakening of actual life, the soul has been plunged into despair. Many a dark passage of unbelief dates from the time when the man found that the Holy Ghost was not doing for his character what could only be accomplished by the co-operation of the human will with the Divine. From all such reactions of deep despair may the good Lord of our spirits graciously deliver us!

Yet we cannot but see that most of us are ready to welcome low ideals of the Christian life, and

that the outcry against sinless perfection may become in our hands a mere excuse for the neglect of very solemn and important duties. Even Christian people are too ready to sneer at those who make mistakes in their reading of these doctrines, and to condemn the truth that is in them because of the gross exaggerations with which they are sometimes accompanied. We know, it may be, that a demand would be made on our consecration which we are not prepared to give; and hence it is easier for us to employ our time in picking holes in other persons' theories than in mending our own practices. We cannot read our Bibles intelligently without seeing that there is a doctrine of high life taught in its pages; and it is possible that it is this doctrine which the Church of God needs more than any other at the present time.

The New Testament proposes to give man a new life. This we call spiritual life. It is spoken of as the "eternal life" in the Bible. It is presented as a fellowship with God Himself, so that His life flows into our souls. It is like the life which we may suppose angels to enjoy, for they are in perfect accord with the will of God. But with ourselves this life has to be implanted in a foreign soil—one made so by our sin. Hence we

must at first pass through the narrow gate of repentance in order to receive its very beginnings. When the heart is at first laden with a sense of its sin it does not catch the whole meaning of the Divine life, for it is absorbed in the endeavour to be free from its intolerable load. When pardon is once received, the joy is, or ought to be, so great that the man is inclined to rest and be thankful. He forgets that the gate is only a point of entrance to a large domain, not a goal with which to be satisfied. Out beyond there is a sphere of being and activity which no mere human artist can paint, for it needs a spiritual discernment to know the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. But if we could see its glories placed before us we should feel the noblest parts of our being thrill with indescribable joy. That region of moral being means that the man is filled with God. It is an ideal state to which the regenerate soul is ever pressing forward. It points to a spiritual condition, where every word is clothed with love Divine, where every thought is the reflex of Christ's own mind, where every motive is love to the Redeemer, and where every good action is done for the benefit of others out of spontaneous gratitude to Christ. It is now the man's joy and supreme delight to love God and

His fellow men. He needs no compulsion, and hardly needs an external command, for he is a law unto himself; and that inward law has been written on his heart by the very power of the Holy Ghost. It is to this many-sided condition of moral beatitude that we are summoned when we are called to be sons of God.

Now, like all perfect states, this one can only be gradually approached by immature beings. But it is not, therefore, to be surrendered because it cannot be attained all at once. It is to be thought over, desired, prayed for, dreamed of, aspired to, and never to be despaired of even in our darkest moments, for it is to this that we are called, and it is for this that we are equipped by the supernatural "power" (*dunamis*, or dynamite) of the Holy Ghost. Each peak to the Alpine climber is but the stepping-stone to the highest point on which he hopes to stand. Each poor endeavour of the schoolboy is the little advance along the road by which he at length comes to the goal of ripe scholarship. Each stroke and line of the artist is helping him to paint the masterpiece which is yet to hand down his name to immortality. The "upward calling" is ours. Man has to rise to the great height of God, and to be worthy of that sonship which is ours in Christ Jesus.



In order to the attainment of this perfection three things, amongst others, are necessary.

#### I. THE LOVE OF CHRIST IN THE HEART.

In order to do a great deed, men need a great impulse; and this is received at the Cross of Christ. We do not hear much of this side of the Christian life except in Evangelical circles, for when once the cross is missed out we have lost the chief motive power of the Christian man. To shift the centre of the Christian system from the Atonement to the Incarnation, is to forget that the latter was for the sake of the former. When God emptied Himself it was that He might be able to touch sin and pain, and this could only be fully done when Christ died the just for the unjust. Love to Christ springs out of the love which Christ has to us. "But suppose that Christ had not died at all, would He not even then have shown His love to us?" We need not "suppose" at all, for it is a fact that Christ died. He did not stop short at the mere manifestation of Himself in the human life, but He went forward to the sacrificial death. And the glow which has come to millions of hearts from that Cross is beyond all words as it is beyond all dispute. There, at the Cross, the flame of unspeakable love is lighted and

kept alight in our souls. Yes, kept alight ; for it is impossible to "forsake the Cross" and to preserve the enthusiasm of the life Divine. Men may walk by the moonlight of Christian ethics, but they will remain cold, and they will have to find that to walk in the light of God's atoning love is to discover that the "blood of Jesus His Son cleanses from all sin." Perfect moral codes will not make a perfect man ; but perfect love will cast out fear. It is that great flood-tide of love which the churches and Christians need. When the Nile rises all the arid soil loses its barrenness, and the fields are speedily covered over with verdure and beauty.

## II. THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT IN THE WILL.

The new life is a birth preceded by our cries to God that He would bestow it upon us. It is not something which we have to learn by imitating others, or which we have to earn by our own efforts. It is something which is freely given us by God. We did not create the love of Christ in our hearts ; it was shed abroad there ; and if we are surprised that we can do so many things that once we thought to be disagreeable, we attribute it to the impulses of a fresh affection which has been graciously granted to us. But we are not to

limit the gifts of God to us by drawing a line at this point of our experience, for all along the line we are debtors to His gratuitous aid. And as the heart is refreshed by the showers of His grace, so also the will is strengthened by the self-same power from on high. It is here that many make a discovery. They thought that when once they were pardoned that they were left to themselves to fight the battle against indwelling sin, and against outward temptation. They find that much as they admire Christian excellence in others, there is something which keeps telling them that it is not for them. This is the lie of the serpent adapted to our dispensation. If we can but be led to believe that we shall never succeed, then farewell to every hope, and when once hope dies, then all effort departs.

Now, the Spirit speaks expressly to us about this, and tells us that though in ourselves we are quite unable to rise to such heights of excellence, yet that through a secret and inward influence imparted to us, we shall be able to will to do what now we cannot do. He puts at once a note of tremendous encouragement in our life, and we are saved by hope. People see only the sacrificing part which they are called to play, and they

shrink back from the pain. But when once the consent of their will is given to the Spirit, they find a new power uplifting them, and making them will what once they avoided. This is the victory. It is to be achieved in the region of the will, for there all the actions of the life are to be found in embryo. Here is the great need of faith and prayer and resolve on our part. We may think that other Christians are more highly gifted than, we are, and that, therefore, they find an enjoyment in sacrifices and duties which are beyond us. This line of argument cuts two ways ; it not only proves their superiority, but it may conclusively show that we are selfish and indolent, and prefer to remain so. What can cure indolence? The sight of something worth having, and the assurance that it may be ours. Maturity of Christian character is within the reach of the humblest, just as much as pardon is. For it is to be obtained by yielding our wills in their operation to the mighty movements within us of God's Spirit. In some of the difficult narrows of Norway it was requisite, I observed, to have two pilots. Both their hands were on the wheel of the vessel at the same time. We are not called upon to be purely passive, or to allow our will-nature to lie unused ; but into the secret springs of our life, hidden away from all

observation, we receive in answer to prayer the silent and strong forces of the Holy Spirit. Effort, and sometimes painful effort, there must be ; but there comes into the renewed man making the effort a mysterious strength which enables him to say, "I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me." The human and Divine hands are both on the wheel of the vessel. Both ; not one only.

### III. THE LIGHT OF GOD IN THE EYE.

This is a great need if we are to be brought to the full stature of men in Christ Jesus. Old Testament saints could not possess the excellences which are possible to ourselves. They did not enjoy the same measure of truth as to God's nature and His requirements. They might serve God with a perfect—that is, with a sincere—heart ; but they, like ourselves, were imperfect. The possibilities are greater with ourselves than with them, because the revelation of God's will is clearer and more glorious. The "True Light" now shines. But the eye, which is man's enlightened conscience, must be healthy. There must be no colour-blindness, no near-sightedness, no inflammation through using the brilliant productions of modern literature. The electric lamp of man's genius is neither so homelike nor so useful as the sunlight of Bible

truth. And when we remember that the most valuable doctrines may be distorted by a jaundiced vision, it becomes us to adjust our eyes to the revelations of God's will. Prayer is our prime necessity. It brings us into daily contact with the source of all enlightenment and of grace. But prayer alone will not avail. We must use all the means which Providence has placed at our disposal to get an understanding as to what God requires at our hands. Consecrated common-sense is an immense help in the varied difficulties with which every life is sure, sooner or later, to be surrounded. And the knowledge of self only becomes possible in as far as we live in the presence of the unseen God. Till we have His verdict on our motives and character, we do not know who and what we are. And there is something both severe and soothing in the self-revelations which He vouchsafes to grant us. We are not allowed to "count ourselves perfect," neither are we permitted to despair of making headway against our inbred sins. Conscience becomes more sensitive without growing morbid; and there is always something more to become and to do as the horizon of life widens before our enraptured eyes. Hence the paradox of the Christian life. Men do not sin, in that they are for ever pursuing

the line of righteousness and obeying the laws of the new life. But they are more than ever conscious of the deflections from the straight line, and hence they agree with the Apostle who says, "If we say that we have no sin, the truth is not in us." The ship goes forward to its destined haven, and though winds and waves turn it to the right hand and to the left, yet at length it arrives where perfect peace is found.

Now, the appeal of Christ is to the young. It was to a *young* man that He said, "If thou wouldest be perfect, go and sell all that thou hast and come and follow Me." The time of youth is the time of great enthusiasms. There is not too much caution in the nature then. Caution kills heroism. Christ wants soldiers who can die, yea, who can do that harder thing—live. He wants such followers because love pines for love. What return is worthy of that great sacrifice which He made for us on Calvary? Listen to those death cries and turn not away to the low levels and commonplaces of purpose with which so many are content. Be worthy of the Lamb who was slain. He wants such followers, because He has a weary world to bring to the regions of rest, and He cannot do without your help. He wants such a following for the sake of youth itself, for without

resoluteness at the beginning Christian manhood cannot be strong. Enter, then, ye young soldiers, among the ranks of the joyous and whole-hearted, and form a body-guard around the Captain of your salvation !





#### IV.

MYSTICAL UNION WITH CHRIST.



## CHAPTER IV.

### MYSTICAL UNION WITH CHRIST.

THAT the Bible was written by poetical minds for those who are capable of seeing facts by means of imagery is everywhere abundantly clear. As soon as we force its words into cast-iron moulds of mere prose, we find ourselves losing their meaning in the very act of explaining them. To press Christ's image of the vine and the branches until it covers the whole sphere of Christian experience is to lose a sense of life's rich manifoldness. Christ said, "I am the vine." By this He meant that there were peculiarities about the living thing called a vine which would enable His disciples to understand the Living Person to whom they were united by ties of spiritual affection. When He told them that withered branches were used as faggots, He did not mean through this familiar fact to teach that *men* would ever be burned. The image is beautiful, tender, and full of spiritual suggestion

when used within its own limitations. It refers to the fact of union between believers and Christ ; but it does not teach that the union is *identical* with that obtaining between the branches and the vine.

As persons, men may exist, and they may bring forth some amount of useful service while they are in separation from Christ ; but as Christians they cannot exist out of Christ. When we come to consider the personalities of men, armed with individual responsibility for their thoughts and actions, the image which our Lord uses does not help us very much. It hints at great truths on which we desire to see further light.

The practical, rather than the mystical, side of the Christian life is taught by our Lord ; for He insists that the true way of abiding in Him is to "keep His commandments." There is as yet little or nothing of supplying them with a secret energy poured forth from His Personality into theirs ; but there is much as to the putting forth of their own effort to do what He bids them. Dry your tears. Do your work. Hold the world with a loose hand. Bear persecution and misunderstanding patiently. Such seem to be some of the thoughts which underlie his closing counsels to them. And in order to support His Divine argument He

refers to His own life, which had been open to their eyes through past years; and He shows them that this was the way in which He had Himself abode in His Father's love. How? By keeping that Father's commandments.

The practical comes first in the Christian life, and we must not seek to understand the hidden processes before we have submitted to the commonplace tasks which have been set us by the Providence of God. It is through the doing that the knowing comes. First produce the works, and then inquire how it was that the union of branch with stem brought the fruit to perfection. This principle, which runs through the physical and mental world, is of prime importance in all spiritual matters.

By mystical union with Christ is sometimes meant such an identity of our personalities with His that the former are lost in the latter. This misconception, often held by some of the "mystics," is founded on exaggerated notions of some language in the New Testament, especially of some of Paul's notable sayings. If, however, we reflect, we shall see that it is by the strengthening of our own individuality that we are best helped to realize the lofty ideals of the Christian life, not by destroying that identity in an assumed ecstatic

interfusion of our being with the Divine. Yet there are warnings in the history of the German mystics to show how easy it is to forfeit the sense of personal responsibility, and in the very effort to obtain a higher holiness to relax that active and practical vigilance by which alone it is to be obtained. To remain perfectly passive, so that the Divine Will may absorb the human, has an enticing sound, and is indeed the expression of a half-truth ; but should it be persisted in, as though it were all that the human soul was called upon to do, great damage will result to the life. It is easy to persuade ourselves that outward pursuits are "worldly," that political affairs are unworthy the attention of the saints, and that the religious life is summed up in our feelings about God's love to us ; but by this method Christians are not made strong, nor is Society moved forward on its true path of progress.

But we have said enough, perhaps, by way of caution and warning. There are deep and positive truths underlying our union with Christ which the Christian should endeavour to understand both on their intellectual and experimental sides. We have before us as we write a facsimile of General Gordon's copy of "Christ Mystical," by Bishop Hall, and the emphatic lines drawn by his hand at

the side of Hall's meditations we find to be very suggestive. Now, General Gordon was an exceptional type of the Christian life. He was thorough ; so that his actual beliefs and his actual conduct dovetailed into one another. He was in himself in a large measure what he desired to be. With most of us desire and attainment are almost like two companions who have lost one another on the road. With him they travelled hand in hand. To be what he was we must first of all have the same intense thirst after holy living. The high life of the soul begins with this deep affection toward Christ, and with this intense desire after Divine things. "If a man love Me, he will keep My words : and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him" (John xiv. 23).

The cardinal point of General Gordon's theology, we are told, was the doctrine of the Indwelling God. Like most of us, he was apt to harp on one string, and hence all other truths were regarded as subordinate to this ; and we are not surprised to find that his second principle was that "Faith is the result of the Indwelling God." This, though partially true, is apt to turn the man in upon himself in order to find God ; whereas, we know that there is an outward and objective



Revelation of God consummated and finished in Christ Jesus. Besides which, the tendency of such a thought in many minds is to lead them to await some Divine impulse before they believe, instead of rousing themselves to acts of consecration, by which alone the Divine impulse can be made effective. Faith, like all other faculties, is the gift of God ; but being a faculty associated with our personal responsibility, it has to be exercised and brought into action by the spontaneous energy which is stored up in every human soul. And that energy is brought into operation by a steadfast and prolonged study of Christ. The man must look at Christ in order to believe.

It is after Christians have been passed through the initial stages of personal sorrow over sin before God and of faith in Christ as the Saviour that they come to see that the new life which they possess has been begun, and must be continued by union with Christ. When that union commenced it is difficult, in most cases impossible, to determine. The beginnings of life are always inscrutable and beyond our finding out. But the condition of its existence and sustenance may nevertheless be positively known. That condition is mystical union with Christ.

A mystery is that which is partly known and partly unknown. The union with the Saviour partakes of this twofold nature. There are sides of it which can be felt but not explained ; there are other sides which can be set forth in words. All personal relationships partake of this twofold character. It is impossible altogether to define what are the influences which two friends have over one another. The relationship is mystical. We see two streams enter into a deep gorge ; they meet ; they emerge ; they now intermingle and form but one river. We have described the process ; and yet we have left the essential mingling of the waters in the gorge below undescribed.

In explaining this deepest experience of the Christian soul we are met by this question, one which is put in half poetical and half philosophical language by Browning in "The Death in the Desert," as to how Christ, being dead, can have communion with the living ; and, further, as to how Christ, even though risen, can have fellowship with tens of thousands of souls in different parts of the habitable globe. The first question is answered by the resurrection. Do you believe that the historic Christ has actually risen ? It is not His influence merely that is risen : it is not

the result of His teaching and spiritual heroism which is immortal. But He Himself is alive. Alive! His body living: changed and glorified, but still in some marvellous method the vehicle of His spiritual activity. His human soul living. Carrying forward, for aught we know, a process of boundless progress, which is to be the type and encouragement of all that is beautiful in our nature, through all the ages that are to come.

But the second question is more difficult to answer, inasmuch as God in His essential nature is so incomprehensible to us. We use words like "infinite," "omnipresent," "omniscient," "all-loving," but how little do we see their meaning! It is here that the mystery of the Indwelling Christ meets us. It was, and is, a mystery that God could become incarnate in the man Jesus. It is in like measure a mystery that Christ can dwell in every man, "the hope of glory." In virtue of His Divine nature He can do this.

The meaning of the advent of the Holy Spirit is that He enables Christ to interfuse His presence wheresoever there is a heart ready for Him. Removed from our world by His ascension, our Saviour is now independent of the laws of time

and space ; and He makes His home in every believing heart. It savours too much of the merely speculative to say it, but we venture to hint that the Holy Spirit is the mediating person between the Saviour and the saint, in some measure as the Saviour is the mediator between the Father and the human but erring child.

What do we mean by the Presence of Christ ? Presence is best expressed by the word "consciousness." When a person is present with us this is what we mean. Now it is supposed to be the great discovery of modern philosophy that everywhere we have the Indwelling or Immanent God. God is no longer pushed back into a far-distant past, where at a given crisis He set this scheme of things in motion ; but wherever there is life there is the consciousness or presence of God ; and, of course, with His presence His power also. Translate all this into the sphere of the spiritual life and we have the truth of the indwelling of Christ in the souls of believers. But if Christ be conscious of our existence, we also are conscious of His. There is a mutual knowledge, and without this the truth is a mere abstraction, of no real use to any one. When we speak of Christ's real presence in the Lord's Supper we

mean that there is a quickened knowledge on man's part, and an intenser yearning of Divine love on Christ's part, so that we feel "Lo, God is here."

"It is my Maker : dare I stay ?  
My Saviour : dare I turn away ?"

In no *essential* sense can "presence" differ according to differing circumstances; but the *activity* of the presence may be greater under some conditions than under others. The presence of Christ is with His word, because by the Spirit He still speaks it, and coming from His own living lips it is no mere echo of the past. The Lord's Supper is a memorial of the atoning suffering; but there are passages of spiritual love there which show that our Lord takes advantage of the memorial to show Himself afresh to His disciples, so that this, too, becomes no mere echo of the past. In the Church we see Him; through a glass darkly—sometimes so dusty with the world's care is the glass that we see Him not all, and He cannot draw very near to us because of our unbelief, though we call ourselves His Church; but at other times both sides of the lens are clear, and we see Him, as it were, almost face to face.

Now, at the root of all these manifestations there

must necessarily be the individual perception of the Abiding One. Do you see Him? Do you know Him near? Is He "closer to you than hands and feet"?

There are three avenues among others by which Personality makes itself felt; and by remembering these we may get to feel that our Lord and Master is with us to-day as really, though spiritually, as He was with His first disciples.

1. *Thinking*.—The mind of Christ thinks itself into ours. It becomes, as it were, ours. It is true that Christ's method is to develop our own faculties, and to respect our own individuality. In no weak sense ought it to be said of a Christian that he has no mind of his own. But in the main outlines of purpose and ambition the soul which welcomes Christ will find that He enters to be Lord and Master. With regard, then, to the commonest things, such as eating and drinking, the spending, earning, and saving of money, we know the thoughts of the Master. Disobedience will most assuredly turn Him from our door. Obedience will enable Him to stay, a Divine and honoured guest within our hearts—the Holy Guest.

It is evident that this is a part of the Christian life which large numbers are not yet realizing.

They have not yet brought every thought into captivity to Christ. You can tell this by the books which they read. They are not careful enough about their food, and for the Bread of Life they contract a kind of distaste. The words of envy, of pride, of narrow prejudice, of bitter criticism, of callous indifference which they speak show that they have not caught the temper of their Lord. On the other hand, there are those who are both wise and strong, good and forcible, of even temper and of earnest resolves, kind to the poor and just to the rich; and these show that the moral effect of living in Christ's presence has told on their opinions. Most people think that they are free to form and express their own judgments; but this mystical union with Christ gives a tone and colour to a man's speech which lifts him into a serener atmosphere than that of modern society.

2. *Conduct.*—Some so speak as though Christ dwelt within us only to aid us in doing what is specifically called religious work. Let such read Brother Lawrence on the "Practice of the Presence of God," and they would meet with a saint in the kitchen.

To many it is a blessed revelation that salvation is a means of obtaining self-mastery, and that it

brings for the discharge of difficult duty a power the existence of which they had never suspected. Whence comes that power? It is derived from a Personal Source. It is not self-wrought. It is not the result of mere spiritual law. But it comes to us through intimate association with the living Christ, through the presence in our hearts of the Holy Spirit. There is no more mystery about this than about the power exerted over us by personal friends. No more—but no less; for all such influence is mysterious and never-ending. We are in a large measure what others make us. And the Christian, yielding himself to the formulative forces of the Spirit, and striving to assimilate those powers, becomes what Christ makes him. Moulded by Christ in every activity of his life, he bears on his character the stamp of a Divine mint, and becomes current coin in the kingdom of heaven.

3. *Talking*. — Speech not only communicates thought and life, but it actually creates. When the babe articulates its wants its infantile existence ceases and its child-life begins. Prayer is our articulate language to Christ, to God in Christ. In its highest phases it is not the mere expression of definite petition, but it is the pouring out of the whole life into the heart of Christ, and it is the



reception back again of the mind of Christ into ours—so that there is reciprocal thought between the finite spirit of the man and the infinite Spirit of God. What we call conversation plays an immense part in all our human relationships. It seems to create and sustain what is rational, social, and spiritual in the ties that bind us together. We have yet to learn, perhaps, that there is something answering to this in the religious sphere. The prophets of old felt a word of God bubbling up within them like a spring of clear water. In our case the same inward force will be felt, only we must remember that the spring is not self-fed, but that it is made full by words, sentences, chapters, and books stored up in the Scriptures. The “inward light” is fed by the oil of Bible truth. The word of Christ dwelling in us richly is not some novel and private revelation, it is rather the old truth flashing upon us with a new force as we see its application to our own personal needs. Thus our Lord does in very deed talk to us; and as we pour out into His sympathetic ear our own story of joy, praise, love, sorrow, sin, hope, struggle, failure, victory, darkness, death, and peace, He fails not to meet us at every point. The branch grafted into the good olive becomes at length one with the tree. The soul which in

timidity and tears ventured to bring its little life to the Glorious Redcemer finds that it is one with Christ. The deep mystery cannot be put in words; it is felt; its issues are seen by all. Mystical union with Christ explains practical fruit-bearing.



V.

LOVING GOD WITH THE MIND.



## CHAPTER V.

### LOVING GOD WITH THE MIND.

IT is only in theory that we can separate the affections from the intellect. Both are closely compacted parts of one soul, and they are developed as portions of one united whole. Yet it is common to see religious people giving greater attention to one than to the other, and as it is easier to allow the emotions free play, we have to be incessantly on our guard to curb and direct them by the colder and more cautious habits of the reason. Israel was told to love God with the mind, because its temptation was to fall away into idolatry. Indeed, it was only by the exercise of the intellect that it could be rescued from the worship of "gods many." The people had to be lifted out of the slough, and to live out of it, before there could be even the possibility of "falling away." The Mosaic revelation was a great appeal to the mind of man. It was an endeavour to put

before the human intellect the unity, the spirituality, and the holiness of the Deity. And it was only as the people understood these conceptions that they could serve and worship the God of Israel. But they must not only understand, they must also love these great moral ideas. If they loved unrighteousness, if they dabbled in moral filth, if they delighted in the appeals to sense which idolatry made, then they would be far from God, even though they were recipients of a Divine revelation. The two elements of love and reason were not contradictory, they were complementary one to the other. Without love they could not rightly understand, without knowledge they could not fully love God.

The danger against which we are warned is twofold. Either we may become mere emotional souls, caring less and less for truth so long only as we are "thrilled," or we may become intellectual beings without a particle of feeling. The dangers are so distinct that they create as it were two classes of Christians, both undesirable because so foolishly and unnecessarily limited. The emotional expresses itself in ritual. The intellectual defines its existence by a spongy absorption of books and teaching.

There is a difficulty. It is solved in the region

of the practical. It is by doing God's will that the emotion proves itself not only genuine, but also powerful (dynamic). It is by applying truth that men show that doctrines are not mere expensive luxuries, kept to prove how superior they are to the common run of Christians. This was Micah's remedy for the exciting ritualism of his day: "*He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*" (vi. 8.)

There are several avenues by which God makes Himself known to us, *e.g.* history, nature, the Bible, the congregation (or Church), and, above all, Jesus Christ. These media appeal to all the faculties of the human soul, and unless there be the exercise and application of all these faculties they cannot be understood. Darwin confessed that the imaginative and poetical side of his nature had suffered partial decay. This was brought about by his exclusive and absorbing study of facts. Many in humbler spheres are sad illustrations of the truth expressed in a homely way by the saying, "He was born a man, but died a grocer." And similar effects are produced in the spiritual life if there be an undue exercise of only one set of faculties.



Christianity sets itself against this lop-sided growth by its command that we shall love God with all the mind, and also by the means which it places at our disposal to fulfil the command. Some suppose that our first concern ought to be with the Bible—that in order to be fully equipped Christians we ought to have a clearly defined idea of its inspiration, and to get a complete knowledge of its literature. This, however, is not so. For as we look back we see that the early Christians, though imperfect, were (without a completed Bible) pioneers in goodness and self-sacrifice, worthy to be called the heroes of our faith. What was common to them and to us was the Person of Christ.

Three centuries after Christ's death the churches were busy defining His nature, and at Nicæa they came to certain definite conclusions, or, rather, they put their previous conclusions in the form of a creed. The metaphysical controversy as to His Divine nature may now, after the lapse of nineteen hundred years, be considered closed. There will no doubt be always some who by reason of education or mental constitution will be unable to receive the doctrine of His Divinity; and these we may peacefully leave to the tender mercies of Him who will not break

the bruised reed or quench the smoking flax. We need not, however, suppose them to be on this point any other than broken reeds or bits of smouldering flax. For the majority of Christian people the consideration of Christ must mean now an inquiry into His mind in relation to disputed points of public and private morals. His supreme authority being granted, and His government being loyally and lovingly accepted, we have still to ascertain our duty amid many perplexing circumstances. And here we need the combined effort both of heart and mind, so that what the eye sees the will may swiftly choose.

The instinct with many is to turn to some saying of our blessed Lord's, and to affirm that, *as they understand it*, the sentence is a final settlement of all controversy. They forget that Christ's first effort was to speak to His own time, and that He has so couched much of His teaching that it requires careful thought in order to apply it to another age than His own. Take the subject of riches as an example. There are passages where He seems to condemn the possession of wealth, and certainly His own life, for obvious reasons, was devoid of the advantages and disadvantages of worldly goods. He told the young

man to sell all and come and follow Him, and, indeed, indicated clearly that poverty was absolutely necessary in his case. Is it necessary in all? Or in most? We know that such a sweeping law, if widely applied, would at once disturb and in a measure destroy modern commerce; and that this would mean the ruin of countless thousands. Sympathy with the poor and with all honest toilers every Christian is bound to have; but does this mean that he is called upon to denounce "capital" as unholy, and to affirm that the major profits are to go to "hands" and not to "heads"? Christ does not unlock all modern problems, but He gives us the key.

The key is a complicated one of love and knowledge. No doubt in olden times it would have been our duty to look into metaphysical problems as to Christ's nature. Even now we cannot escape them. We must give our yea or nay to such doctrines as Christ's Deity, the sacrificial character of His death, the reality of His resurrection, the eternal relation of the soul to God brought about by the obedience of faith, the perpetual presence of the Spirit in the regenerated soul and sanctified Church. All these have in some measure to be apprehended, even if not mastered, by the ordinary Christian. And certainly no man need expect, in

the long-run, to be an effective *teacher* of Christian truth to others who does not give close attention to the nature and history of such cardinal truths as these.

But for the most part the mind has to take a practical trend. This is what Christ intends when He begs us to consider the weak and weary as His representatives. The ingenuity of the mind and the pity of the love are the two hands by which we do His will. Or we may put it in another way, and say that the Christian life sums itself up in two words—work and worship. These are in a large measure blended in one in the matured spiritual life, and yet they have distinct territories, fenced off each from the other.

For the cultivation of both territories we need the outpoured clouds of emotion and the diligent husbandry which gives itself to the soil. *Work.* What is religious work? Does it begin on Sunday morning and end on Sunday evening? Is it confined to the higher order which has to do with the spiritual redemption of others? Or does it intertwine itself with the so-called secular toil of Monday? Are the farmer's diligence, the banker's financial skill, the labourer's handicraft, the stone-breaker's monotonous hammering, the doctor's

insight—are these distinct and definite performances of God's will? *Worship*. What is to be its ruling principle—that which pleases us, or that which is acceptable to God? If the latter, then must we not consider what kind of a God it is whom we adore?

It will be seen that the religious life is not such an easy and alphabetical bit of learning as we at first supposed. It requires some reflection on our part, and it implies that sources of information as to God's will are open to us. These sources are, as we know, nature, conscience, Jesus Christ, and the Bible. There are other springs whence water flows, but these are the fountain-heads. Now, it requires some "mind" to find out where we shall begin. In the absence of this, even men of ability have been led into perplexity. They began with "nature," but they found it like an iron safe, which could only be opened when a man knew the right "combination." The works and words of God are so dovetailed into one another that the former cannot be understood without the latter.

Jesus Christ, though coming late in history, is in reality the Alpha. If it be true that "all things were made by Him," then we may be sure that we cannot comprehend the ebbing and flowing tide of

life about us till we understand, at least in some small measure, Him in whom "all things consist." There is a consistency of life and purpose running through creation which makes it dangerous for us to be mere specialists in our study of God. Religion and science are two hemispheres of one sphere; they are this even though the inhabitants of one side of the globe of knowledge often declare that the world is flat. Men are divided; the realms of knowledge form but one kingdom. But we must take care to "know Christ" before we propose to know the why and wherefore of what He has made.

But this investigation into the nature and will of our Lord involves us in the exercise of all our best faculties. Poets like Shakespeare, Wordsworth, and Browning ask for study before we finally pronounce on their meaning. Much more in the realm of spiritual truth is it necessary for us to spend years of loving attention at the feet of Him who is "the Truth." Persons are the most complicated and the profoundest subjects of study :

"The proper study of mankind is man."

The greatest novels are great, not because of their "plot," but because of "character." How difficult is it to analyze and comprehend the men and

women around us! With our dearest ones there are always new and delightful surprises of gentleness, purity, and devotion, which come to us like an entrancing sunrise after a night of pain. Much more must this be so with One who loves us with an everlasting love. He has many things to say to us; His heart is brimming over with the water of life; He knows all the way we have to tread—its serenity and its despair alike—and He goes before us into Galilee. Yes! And if we have our “agony,” and our “trial,” and our “bitter tree,” He himself partook of all these, and feels with us as only a sinless Brother can. Hence it is that there is always more in His sentences than seems at first. They have infinite love behind them. Each word is not merely a clear-cut gem. It is this, but it is more—it is a breath of life, a whisper of love, a sunbeam from God, a wind that wafts our thought heavenward. “Consider Him.” “Looking (away) unto Jesus.” “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.”

Then, with this key of life in our hands, we can proceed to examine all the sides of our work and worship, and to enter into the treasure-houses of truth which God has built for us.

The life of conscience becomes healthy and well

developed when we are much with Christ. Not, indeed, that we can cull sentences from His teaching, as though the Gospels formed a kind of Koran, giving us information as to every detail of duty. No ; but there is an inspiration about His principles which enables us to regard minute matters as parts of a great life-plan which we are called upon to carry out. No conscience is infallible, and fussily to carry about our little lamp, as though it could take the place of the sun in the heavens is to render ourselves and our professions ridiculous. If we are to have enlightened consciences we must be in communion with the "Light of the World." Men can only have Christian consciences by themselves becoming Christian.

The world of nature is to the devout man a temple of the living God. It teems with wonder and life. Sir John Lubbock, in "The Beauties of Nature," has given many striking illustrations of this, drawn from his own close observation and wide reading. Nature is so deeply interesting that we sometimes wonder that God does not allow us more time to examine it and admire it. What are seventy years when we are overarched by the sublimity of the heavens, and hemmed in at all sides by the marvels of sea and earth? Evolved



by an ever-present intelligence, the system around us appeals to rational and loving beings like ourselves.

The Bible is the greatest devotional book ever given to man. But it may easily cease to be this if we do not always recollect that it contains the record of God's revelation of His own nature to man. It feeds the emotional life by pure and elevated feeling. To read one of its sentences before prayer is often to get inspiration for the sacred exercise. The daily text-book is a most useful companion, not only because our lives are busy, but because our minds are limited, and can only take in one thought at the time. Passages at family prayer should be short, pointed, and connected, seldom extending beyond twelve verses. The evening portion may conveniently be read in the social circle, before we feel the night's fatigue overcoming us. Slumberous reading is the mark of a lean and lazy life.

But behind all devotional uses of the Scriptures there lies the question as to what the Bible really means, and what it teaches. We cannot honestly say that this is an easy subject of study. Religious truth has indeed been put in many pleasant and picturesque forms within its pages; but the history of God's chosen people has to be studied

before we can understand their literature ; for the Bible is, as Dr. Simon has well put it, "*the out-growth of theocratic life.*" If any one supposes that he can understand this theocratic life by quoting a few isolated passages here and there from the Old Testament he is quite mistaken. Yet a large number presume to teach Sunday scholars, and some even stand in our pulpits, who have no real Biblical basis for their teaching.

We can only serve and love God with the mind by using our minds, and these ought to exercise themselves wisely and frequently on the material which He has provided. The key of the Bible is the Person of Christ. We begin at the end, as it were, in order to understand the beginning. How could men comprehend or desire Christ until a nation had been made, and its mind and heart had been put into a truly religious mould? A Christ who had come instead of Moses would have been an anachronism to the human intellect and heart. He had to come after Moses. "The nation" had to be carried on the shoulders of the Law, along weary ways of wilderness ignorance, before it could be put down at the school-door of the Messiah. When we look back on those roads, we see what hardness of heart had to be dealt

with, and we find how necessary it was to speak by "divers portions," now of quarter and then of half truths, before the soul of man was ready to receive the Truth Himself. We are therefore to "judge" the Bible itself by the teaching of Christ. Its difficulties are to be solved, not by making all parts of Scripture speak with the same certainty and clearness, but by remembering that the final revelation has come in the words, work, person, and resurrection of our Lord.

Some will shrink back from this course, and they will give as a reason for their backwardness that too much knowledge is "dangerous." No doubt the intellectual side of the Christian life has in many cases been pursued to the exclusion of the emotional, and an academic dryness has been the consequence. But what we are exhorted to pursue is a combination of love and intellect: As to danger, life itself is dangerous, crossing the sea is dangerous, love is dangerous, going to school or college is dangerous, and business is pre-eminently dangerous. Danger is a part of our discipline everywhere, and we must not expect an immunity from it in the highest realms of life. Rather let men thank God that He honours them by asking so much at their hands; let them reflect what troubles and disasters have come to the Church

through ignorance, superstition, and over-  
emotionalism ; and then, taking stock of all those  
varied faculties with which it has pleased their  
Creator to endow them, let them "call upon all  
that is within them " to bless the Lord.



VI.

THE POWER THAT PURIFIES.



## CHAPTER VI.

### THE POWER THAT PURIFIES.

THE power that purifies is the culmination of three lines of spiritual force. Environment, man's will, and God's Spirit, are three phases of strength ; but all things are of God, and we must trace back all transformations of character to the Divine operation on the human soul. Still, it is most necessary that we should fasten our minds on the human element, or otherwise we should lose sight of our own responsibility. We must not forget the "Means of Grace," for they form our chosen environment ; nor must we cease to exert the inward resolves of our own wills, or otherwise we shall frustrate God's good purposes concerning us. When, therefore, we dwell on the human duties which devolve upon us there is, in the background, a consciousness that the original and ultimate influence for our sanctification is of and from God.

With this thought in our minds we may look at



some different sides of this power by which we, who are so feeble and imperfect, are encouraged to take hold of the life which is life indeed.

#### I. THERE IS THE VISION OF PERFECT PURITY.

This we can never see in all its infinite height and depth ; but we are expected to catch glimpses and outlines of it. Purity in God has no element of fear or doubt in it, as it must ever have with ourselves. With the best saint on earth there is always the dread that evil may at any moment get a mastery by some subtle surprise, or by some fierce onslaught. But with God it must be far otherwise. Yet even He chose to come in human form, so that He might face the foe and conquer it on our behalf. And in our Lord there were "strong crying and tears," showing that He, too, knew the keenness of the blade which was wielded by the Evil One. And it is in the conquest which He achieved that we have our fairest vision of what perfect holiness is. Christ was temptable, but not sinful. This is a condition which we cannot enter into, on account of our inherent sinfulness. But none the less can we wonder at the sublime heights to which the "Son of Man" attained. They were mountain-peaks of self-forgetfulness to which none other has ever climbed, and as we "consider" Him we see what this

perfect purity is. It knows no thought of self ; it has no room for sinful doubtings ; it loses no time in balancing conflicting interests ; it has a grand unity of purpose which finds its centre in God Himself.

We read in Isaiah that the cherubim with veiled faces cry to one another, "Holy, holy, holy ;" but the manifestation of the Godhead granted to them is too transcendent for our eyes ; we need something more homely and human ; and this is given to us in the life and lot of our Lord. We cannot draw out the lines and lay down the definitions in words ; but we can gaze on that history of supreme moral beauty, and, gazing, we see and feel what God means us to become. And it is this gazing which is a great necessity in the first place ; for men do so easily elude and slip away from their highest duties by looking at lower ideals of character. They have no spiritual longings ; and when the water of life is brought to them they have no thirst which leads them to drink. Our spiritual faculties die by misuse. We have but to turn away our eyes from beholding holiness, and we shall lose our desire after its loveliness. It is considered a great calamity when a person loses sight or any other bodily sense. The very dread of this sends them far and wide, to this physician

and that. Why, then, when our power of appreciating holiness is threatened with paralysis, are we not more eager and anxious? Here the soul itself is threatened—the very citadel of the manhood. And yet such is the radiant beauty of that singleness of purpose which was in Christ, that if once we have caught sight of it we shall not willingly let the glory depart. It fills the heart with such thrilling delight, and with such magnificent hopes, that the man cannot turn himself away from the best even at the bidding of the good. Let him, then, wait on the Vision till it haunts him night and day, and he can give his soul no rest until, going about the darkened streets, he find again Him who is “altogether lovely.”

Hence it is that the New Testament, and the Old as interpreting it, must ever have a supreme place as a means of purifying the eyes of the soul. There is an indescribable charm about the Scriptures which exercises the same kind of influence over the mind as a lovely piece of scenery does over the senses. We feel better, without exactly knowing why it is so. The reason is that an unearthly splendour has visited the inner man, and we cannot be the same as we were before.

As Coleridge put it, “The Bible finds us.”

## II. THE SACRIFICE WHICH TAKES AWAY SIN.

The Apostle John, who treats more fully than others of this virtue, lays stress on the fact that the "Blood of Christ cleanses from all sin"; and by this he does not mean that the Atonement is merely a forgiving power. He refers to its cleansing influence. His idea is that we are on the high-road to be made saints, and that for every inch of the road we need new strength. The same thought is conveyed to us in the perpetual obligation which rests upon us to show forth the Lord's death. That death is a point of departure for the Christian life; but it is a perpetual inspiration all along the way to God. The cross of Christ is the perfect and harmonious combination of righteousness and of love. These two qualities are lived out before our eyes when we gaze on our Saviour dying. Hence there is a great truth implied in the old method of carrying the cross before advancing armies. "You shall conquer by this sign." The Christian sees the cross everywhere, and wherever he sees it he is both broken down and built up by it.

There are many most estimable religious persons, it is true, who do not seem to need the cross. They have imbibed the lofty ethical teaching of Christ, and have made it their own. There is a

very high moral tone in all their dealings with their fellow-men, and no taint of dishonour rests upon their reputation. Yet, beneath the searching eye which sees all that passes in the soul, they are judged to be lacking in many things which go to make up perfection. It is with them as with a church partly built; the nave is there, but the chancel, the very holiest place, is not yet built in their souls.

In what way, then, is this deficiency to be made good? By the influence of this great act of righteous love done on their behalf. The remembrance of it helps, as it haunts, the man. Memory is a vast influence in the growth of the character, for it binds all the experiences of the spirit into one great whole; and the remembrance of that central fact in the history of our Lord's mission for man is the inspiration from heaven which we need. "Never shall the cross forsake me." But if we allow speculation on its nature to take the place of implicit trust in the Redeemer, it may forsake us. It may dissolve into a cloud of mere history, with which we have no personal relation. Then our innermost life must suffer; then sickness steals over the soul; then the relish for spiritual realities departs. We may be building a fair structure, but the "only foundation" has been

removed by some subtle stratagem, and the fall of the man is only a question of time.

That this transcendent power is needed all along the experience of the Christian life is easily seen, if we reflect on the nature of the soil into which God drops the vitalizing seed of the truth. The man, when converted, is not changed into an angel; he remains a man still. His flesh has its own wants and passions; his mind its limitations and its selfishness. His emotions are readily affected by passing and outward objects, his will is infantile in its weakness, and his circumstances are loaded with the poison of sin. If, therefore, he is to escape the corruption within and without, it must be by the ministry of a tremendous fact. God loved me, and His Son died for me. This is the expression of the greatest fact in the spiritual history of every Christian soul, and it repeats its influence over us whenever it is called to mind and believed with a fervent heart.

### III. THE SPIRIT WHO ABIDES.

There is a Spirit in God who rushes out after the souls that seek His presence. The Creed speaks of Him as *proceeding* from the Father and the Son; but this procession is not to be regarded as a leisurely and sluggish action of the Divine heart and Will. There are slow actions

on the part of God, but this is not one of them. How does the cataract descend from the river above? Impetuously. So doth the Spirit of God come down from above on human hearts, till they are taken by storm and are saturated with the new and supernal influence. There is ever, on all Pentecostal occasions, the sound of a "mighty rushing wind." Force the air from a vessel, and with what velocity it speeds in again as soon as an opening is made. These are the physical parables of great spiritual facts which are ever occurring in the silent experiences of those who are born and sanctified of the Spirit. Niagara's thunderous roar, the cyclone's hurrying wings, these have their counterparts in the work of the Holy Ghost.

Or perhaps we are better able to see this truth when we turn from the natural to the human natural. The child is ready to be borne down by the swift train as it plays all unconsciously in the track; but the mother's feet are even swifter than the express, and her darling one is rescued. It is this outburst of love towards us which we are so slow to understand. Yet it is the one thing which we need to learn; for there is nothing so full of hope to the human soul as the knowledge that God Himself deigns to dwell within us. Our

faint desires become great flames of undying affection under the strong influences of His love. He raises us; He enlarges our life-purpose; He simplifies our ambitions; He delivers us from self, with its vain deceits; He bends each motion of the soul into willing obedience to the Divine will.

The Spirit is very sensitive. The holiness which He has is one that shrinks from the most distant approach of evil. It is a perfect cleanness, and therefore shudders at the faintest breath of sin. To use human language, we must go half way to meet Him. Sounds have to be musical to suit finely attuned ears. Colours have to be harmonious to please the artistic eye. We must seek to obtain and to retain the favour of God. Of one it was said that he had this testimony that "he pleased God." A higher encomium could not have been passed on any man than this. Shall we not, then, be careful to approve ourselves to Him whose we are, and whom we profess to serve? The conditions are plain, and they need constant recollection on our part. Let us mention some of them without enlarging: 1. The body is to be ever on guard. 2. The mind is to be enterprising in its search after Divine truth, and to hold fast that which it finds. 3. The emotions



always under control are to be fed by the love of Christ and not by mere ritual, and are to flow always in practical channels ; the man who feels most is to do the most good, and is to be very easy to work and live with. 4. The will is to be given over into God's hands ; it is to be resolute for service and submissive in time of suffering. 5. Friendship is to be sought principally for spiritual ends, and social life is to be sanctioned by the laws of Christ. 6. Rest should be found mostly in some fresh form of work. 7. Prayer, praise, and meditation are to be daily exercises till our "last, labouring breath."

#### IV. THE SOUL EXERCISING ITS FIVE SENSES.

It is with spiritual power as it is with health and wealth ; it increases by being possessed. Wealthy men often grow richer, because cash in hand enables them to increase their possessions. Health, too, is a growing volume of energy with those who have it, so that it is common to say that the young will grow out of their weaknesses. There is, then, an augmenting force in the possession of holiness. The birds come and sing in the boughs beneath the window, the sun shines through the casement, the honeysuckle creeps over the porch, and the earliest flowers seem to bask in the sunny garden of him who has a

humble and joyous soul. Like goes out to like, and joy flies to joy, till all the neighbourhood of the sanctified soul is thick with songs of praise.

Has the soul senses? We may put it so. It has avenues by which the outward world is enabled to pass into its hidden recesses.

1. *An Attentive Ear*.—What glad messages are carried from God Himself to those whose natures are attuned to wait on His will and word! "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth," is their response to the indications of both providence and of grace.

2. *A Single Eye*.—"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Some have a defect of vision, caused by their self-consciousness. They can never forget self, and this seems to vitiate all they do and say. But the upward gaze cures this. Absorbed in doing Christ's will, it is a small thing to be judged or praised by men.

3. *A Tender Touch*.—The soul has a skin full of nerves, and as it comes into contact with other souls they are aware of a certain subtle influence. The contact is not rough, coarse, clumsy, but gentle, unselfish, and thoughtful. This goes by the general name of "tact," and it is no mechanical art to be learned by imitation. It is rather the

outcome of what a man is, and it will be tender and healing when the soul within is full of Christ-like wisdom and love.

4. *A Wholesome Taste*.—The vitiated taste comes from a deteriorated character. We talk of cultivating the taste, and it is to be done in the spiritual education. The taste for good books and good comradeship grows with exercise. Bad novels, trashy literature, empty conversation, heated scenes of amusement, drop away from the soul which is being purified much as the old leaves are cast off from the tree when the new ones are preparing to appear.

5. *A Sensitive Smell*.—Moral disgust is a part of a strong character. When the lost coin is found, it is seen to be stamped on one side with love of the good, and on the other with hatred of the bad. But the sense of smell is not only intended to repel us from the corrupt; it is given us that we may walk in God's garden with delight. There are flowers of character there which, though very lowly, are full of fragrance, and whose influence over men is of the most penetrating and lasting kind. Sir John Lubbock tells us that more pleasure is got out of flowers than out of all the gold that ever was coined. To perceive the application of this fact in the spiritual realm, and to act

upon our knowledge, is to enter into the secret of Jesus and to find rest to our souls. If we examine any day on which we have been harassed and crushed by care, we shall find that it was when we did not go into the garden of the Lord to admire what was humble, simple, and childlike. We were then seeking for great things, and busying ourselves with banks or warehouses or streets, whereas we ought to have been thinking of and scenting out the flowers of Christian grace which were close to our pathway. The Saviour says, "Learn of Me." Why? "For I am meek and lowly of heart."



VII.

HEAVEN IN THE HEART.



## CHAPTER VII.

### HEAVEN IN THE HEART.

I. THERE MUST FIRST BE THE REMOVAL OF THOSE THINGS WHICH CLOG AND HINDER THE ENTRANCE OF HEAVEN INTO THE HEART.

It seems necessary that we should know something of the hell of sin before we can know much of the heaven of holiness. Dante, who sang so sweetly of Paradise, had first of all visited in imagination the dark and dolorous regions. "Paradise Lost" preceded "Paradise Regained," in Milton's poetry. There is a suggestion here of what the experience of the Christian is likely to be. Not that we would imply that it is necessary for the soul to plunge into all kinds of uncleanness before it can know the beauty of purity. But inasmuch as every man has the plague within his own soul, it is essential that he should know something of this before he will appreciate what a wonderful power is brought to



us in the redemption of Christ Jesus our Lord.

1. *Watchfulness*.—This is a virtue which we do not sufficiently exercise. There are careless children of Zion, who sit at ease; and we may easily be among the number. Born in a Christian land, nurtured in a pious home, brought into the fellowship of a spiritual church, we may readily suppose that our very circumstances will be our safeguard. They are, indeed, an advantage; but they are not sufficient to create within us the new heart. Bunyan saw that there was a way to hell even from the gate of heaven. And a greater than Bunyan has warned us, that the children of the kingdom may be cast out at last. Does not everything, therefore, point to the necessity of keeping a strict watch over ourselves, lest we be overcome by the subtilty of sin? If we have not watched against our faults and failings lately, we have reason to be very much in fear about our present condition, and about our future prospects. It is almost certain in that case that weeds have overgrown our garden.

2. *Fasting*.—There is a kind of demon which does not go out of the nature except by fasting as well as by prayer. Indeed, the soul cannot pray, under these circumstances, unless it also fasts. The

animal nature has such power that it may hinder the soul from holding communion with the Eternal. We are all apt to give advice to one another on this point, and we generally know what our neighbours should give up, and there are few who do not feel themselves competent to proclaim a general fast. We can tell other people that they should not smoke or drink wine, or that they should not go to the theatre, or that they should give at least a tenth of all that they possess to religious purposes. But the difficulty begins when we take ourselves in hand, and after due examination try to find out what our peculiar temptations are, and then to bring the pressure to bear on our own lives. The true principle of Christian fasting is, that we should abstain from our own pleasure in order to minister to the happiness of others. We shall find that this will guide us as to many things about which we are in perplexity. And by means of such fasting we shall rise on stepping-stones of our dead selves to higher things.

3. *Fellowship*.—This has two sides. "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." Those works are always around us. They beset business men, and right nobly do many resist the temptations of their life. But this is only done

when there is eager earnestness to win the prize of righteousness. Short cuts to wealth may not be so numerous as they once were; but they are quite sufficient in number to render the utmost caution necessary on the part of those who would keep themselves unspotted from the world! Buyers and sellers, men who make goods and women who go shopping, employers and their servants, those who pay and those who receive wages, all these must remember that it is easy to defraud one's neighbour and to be thieves in disguise. From all fraud, from the heated imagination, and from many a modern novel may the good Lord deliver us! For these things are not of heaven.

There should be to us what there was to Lot when he escaped from Sodom, a little Zoar of friendship. Many people think that the communion of the saints consists in knowing everybody in a large church, or in being able to gossip with the few who form a village congregation. But true communion is one of heart and mind; and as the human soul is very limited, we should be content with a few friends to whom we can go in all times of prosperity and of sorrow, in the assurance that we shall meet with sympathy. But of this we shall speak hereafter; we only refer to it

now, because the cultivation of the good is the only effectual way of shaking off the bad. The gambler, the luxurious, the wine-bibber, do not pursue us with their friendship when they perceive that we have something better in life to live for than the ephemeral interests of the hour.

4. *Fear*.—Easy-going views of God and of human life are very common, but they are untrue. Heaven has walls, both to keep the good within and to exclude the wicked. Nothing enters there which defileth. Then when men deliberately carry defilement in their hearts, how can they hope to enter there? They are running on towards a terrible future. How far what is called the “larger hope” has favoured soft and sentimental views of God and man, it would be an interesting thing to inquire. We all indulge that sentiment at times, as a hope; but when it hardens into a dogma, which affirms that all men will most certainly be saved, it does mischief to the spiritual life, because it affirms what is not revealed, and it tends to remove a wholesome fear from our hearts.

II. THERE MUST BE SPIRITUAL RECEPTIVENESS ON OUR PART, IF HEAVEN IS TO BE IN THE HEART.

1. *By close and constant fellowship with God.*—God should be the greatest reality in our lives, even as He is the Supreme Being in the universe. To receive God into the heart is to have all that we require. He alone can satisfy us, and when He dwells within our souls then a deep peace takes possession of us. To love Him is to live. To hold fellowship with him is to have His own life enter into our very being. The heart is often touched through the intellect; or, at least, it is necessary to understand what God has done for us, and also what His thoughts are in order to see how adorable He is. Therefore is it most important that we should study the unfolded thoughts of God, so that we may not be soft sentimentalists, feeding our natures on mere passing emotions. The facts of Christ's life well pondered are the best corrective to a mere emotionalism, for they tell who and what God is in a way which we could learn from no other source. Daily thought about Him, with the critical faculty laid aside, will surely feed the mind with the greatest of truths, and thus minister to our own highest life. When Christ dwells in the mind, then heaven has begun in our souls. And the fellowship with Him which He permits us to have is a higher thing than that of mere

petition. Christ's attitude towards His disciples was a different one from that which He was obliged to assume towards the multitude. In the latter case He was constantly being pressed with petitions ; the sick came to be healed. But the disciples for the most part were healthy men ; they needed no such miracles wrought in their bodies. What they required was a communion of mind, so that they might rise to a clearer sphere of vision ; and this He gave them till their heart burned within them as He talked with them by the way. In their case they felt virtue going out of Him into them ; but it was the influence, not of physical healing, but that of spiritual power. They were to watch with Him, to walk and talk with Him, to catch His inspiration and to see His purposes, and to feel God pouring into them as they came closer and closer to His mind. And it was this fellowship which made heaven to them, and which will make it for us, until we feel that to be "with Christ is far better" than all the greatest of our earthly joys.

2. *By cultivating calm and cheerful dispositions.*  
—These are the gift of the Spirit, like all spiritual graces ; but they are sent into us in accordance with our own conduct. It is true that some find

it easier than others to manifest a happy frame of mind. We are dependent in some measure on our physical health for our spiritual frames and feelings, and also in some respects on our outward circumstances; but we must not charge on these things moral defects which the grace of God is intended to cure. A lazy dependence on God, and an indolent drifting on the stream of circumstances, are both to be avoided. The will has to be summoned from its slumbers if we are to be made happy in our dispositions and habits. A cloudless sky leaves no impression on a man who is desperately determined to maintain a melancholy face. Some always look at the dark side of things, and neither God nor man seem able to rouse them out of their sinful lethargy. If heaven is a place of praise, as we believe, we must be learning the songs of gratitude here on earth. Our life is to be a rehearsal of praise.

There are few things which our characters need more than this optimistic habit of heart. It is founded on our faith in the living and loving God; and he who has no joy in himself shows that he has not drunk at the river of the Divine blessedness.

3. *By habits of prompt obedience.*—If once men tamper with conscience, then there is an end of

the happiness which is meant to take up its freehold in our natures. But our moral sense will readily part with its sensitiveness if we do not yield instant obedience to its dictates. It is like the alarm bell to the sleeper, of use so long as the man instantly awakes and begins the day ; but of no service if he turns over on the other side and still slumbers. If we ask why it is that Christianity brings so little real peace to many minds, we shall often find that it is because they do not make its precepts the invariable guide to conduct. It is only God's statutes which can be turned into songs in the house of our pilgrimage, not the mixture of public opinion with the Divine law.

Nothing can give a man more surely a clear sky than a conscience void of offence. We have days of uneasiness, when we are below par spiritually ; and if we would dare to examine ourselves we should often find that the unrest was produced by some slight act of disobedience to the movements of the Divine Spirit. Some appeal was made for money, to which we did not respond ; some word was left unspoken, or some word was unwisely spoken ; some pleasure was preferred to duty ; and the inevitable result came, that the heavens were shut up and there was no rain.



On the other hand, what bright days those were when, by God's help, we gave good heed to the calls of duty, and with a willing mind took our share of the responsibilities of the Church and of the world! The joy which came was that of a man at peace with himself, and therefore at peace with the world; and also in the best sense at one with God. We should not then seek, as so many do, to find how many duties we can elude; but rather try to see how many we can find and fulfil. And we should be prompt. Many wait to be flogged by Providence before they will move along the path of responsibility. Busy men learn that it is only by instant action that the multitude of tasks can be done. Their letters are answered instantly. As work presents itself it is done and sent off into the limbo of things finished. The dallying about duty is not heavenly; it savours of our sinful and sluggish nature, and will have to be cured before we shall be fit for the business of the heavenly life. But, meanwhile, a day's work well done for God is exhilarating in the highest degree, and makes us know something of what heaven is like.

4. *By elevating friendships.*—There are two sides to human love: that which stoops to those needier than ourselves; and that which looks up to real

moral excellence, and seeks to emulate its virtues. The former partakes of the essence of Christ's own compassion, and must ever be cultivated by the true Christian. It is not likely to be forgotten in these days when so much is said on behalf of Christian work for the poor and the destitute at home and abroad. But the latter side may perhaps be overlooked and forgotten. Men need to remember that there are always those who are better in moral and spiritual excellence than themselves. It is often noticeable that those who do not mix well with their spiritual equals and superiors are marked by a pride which is offensive both to God and man. In "society" there is a constant and mad desire to rise in the world, and those in one class are frequently striving to enter into that which is higher than their own. It is as we know a sad and miserable race, but still we may learn a lesson from the children of mammon. Why should we be satisfied with our own moral and religious attainments? There are many who are far better than we are, and to these we ought to turn for inspiration and for help. In many cases they are not in a better social position than ourselves, but in a worse; and yet they can teach us much about God which we could not otherwise learn. The

university exists not merely that a young man may come into contact with books, but with men. To be with better men is a power in itself. And there are few more powerful influences in the formation of Christian character than the close friendships of life. Let men and women be careful! It is not all gold that glitters. From the poor, the lowly and the humble, we often learn the secret of Jesus best of all. For the sake of the young especially, let parents beware of making a mere splash and show in the world. It will satisfy for a time; but in the long run neither parents nor children will be lifted up in the true scale of being. The first psalm is full of suggestion on this point, and if men would take home its wholesome monitions there would be much fewer bankruptcies in the spiritual life. Man would rise in the only sense in which he can really ascend; he would be more like his Maker and Father.

Finally, the way to the heavenly life is the way to God, for only He can make our real Paradise. If we find and enjoy God here, then indeed heaven has begun below. The words of William Law should be pondered: "What a folly, then, to be so often perplexed about the way to God, for nothing is the way to God, but our heart. God

is nowhere else to be found, and the heart itself cannot find Him, or be helped by anything else to find Him, but by its own love of Him, faith in Him, dependence upon Him, resignation to Him, and expectation of all from Him."



# PRACTICAL LESSONS

VIII.

THE GOOD MASTER.

“And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, and forbear threatening : knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven ; and there is no respect of persons with Him.”—EPH. vi. 9.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE GOOD MASTER.

THE whole gist of this command is this: Put yourself in your servant's place; try to think what you would like to have done to you if you were a servant, and then do those things, and you will not be far wrong in your treatment of the persons committed to your care. Of course the same principle holds good with regard to mistresses. Where women employ women they have to remember that both they and those whom they employ have one Lord who will judge and reward them both. These words were used by the apostle Paul when social life was in a different condition from the present. It was a day of slavery. These exhortations were addressed to slaves and their masters. The same great principles, however, hold good now as then. Those principles summed themselves up, as we have said, in the golden rule of Christ.



I. WHAT MASTERS ARE TO DO.

II. WHAT MASTERS ARE TO BE.

III. THE SPIRIT WHICH IS TO ANIMATE THEIR  
DOING AND BEING.

I. WHAT MASTERS ARE TO DO.

A good master is one who does that which is good. "Even a child is known by his doings (or maketh himself known by his doings), whether his work be pure and whether it be right" (Prov. xx. 11). If this be so with a child it will be so with a man. The first thing about a man is, what is he doing? Not does he profess. But what does he actually do. Now, the duties of a master are twofold; he buys service and pays for it. Like all buyers he is to be careful that he gets what he pays for; or, otherwise, he not only receives wrong himself, but he inflicts it on others. In his payment of wage he has to be just, paying more than the market price if needs be, so that he may be sure that he is indeed just. For the justice is not an earthly one altogether, but a heavenly one. The actual money payment is regulated by a great many complicated considerations, e.g. price received for the article produced; the number of persons applying for a particular department of employment; the demand for the persons employed; the amount of capital at the

back of the employer. But it will be found that even this money payment is influenced by moral considerations more than is generally supposed. The outcry against sweating is a moral cry. It is a protest on the part of a partly Christianized public against paying a wage when it does not allow the worker to purchase the common necessities of life. So, too, the "living wage," which is now current coin, is a phrase which has sprung out of the conscience of the community after it has been instructed by the law of Christ. If now we turn back to see what servants or slaves were expected to do in Paul's time, we shall see what were the analogous things which masters were also expected to do.

*They were to be anxious.* At first it looks as though the "fear and trembling" were of a servile nature. They were to dread the lash of the taskmaster. But it was to be a fear lest they should not act a Christian part in the different circles which they were called upon to fill. So with the masters. In fact they are to take a genuine interest in those who serve them, or otherwise they do not fulfil this law. When we go into a shop and buy a commodity we feel that our duty is finished when we have paid for it. It is like putting a penny into the slot and

taking out the sweetmeat ; the action is done, and we have no more responsibility. But it is different in our dealings with human labour. There it is true we purchase something, and pay for it in due time. But we are now in touch, not with mere commodities or with automatic machines perforated by a slot, but with human beings who are in essence like ourselves. And as soon as this is the case, we come into a new region of responsibility. Even in the purchase of an article in a shop, we are not free to lay aside this fear and trembling. We know that shop-assistants are often kept very late at their work ; we cannot think that the hours are necessary ; and it is with a pang that we purchase at that particular place.

The servant who makes his purchase at a late hour, when he could almost as easily have made it at an early one, is for the time being in the position of master, and is certainly not doing as he would be done by. There are many observations which purchasers can make for themselves which will enable them to determine whether they will employ labour which they find to be injurious, if not positively ruinous, to those who serve. Now this is the rule for all who directly employ service, whether it be in the warehouse

or in the house, in the mill or in the shop, in the bank or in the ship, on the railway or on the canal, by means of companies or by means of individuals. The principle is that those employed shall be thought about as human beings, and that they shall not be exposed to dangers and temptations which, under similar circumstances, we should not like to be imposed on ourselves. The workers are to be thought about. They are to be a part of the master's care. It is impossible to lay down rules; the Scripture is content to lay down principles from which every one must deduce his own rules. The rules will not perhaps be the same in any two cases. An employer of labour in London asked me whether I thought it right of him to provide a reading and sitting-room with a library, for his assistants. He had a very large number and paid them well, and in many ways looked after their comfort. According to many he did his duty thoroughly; but still, being a Christian man, he was careful and troubled about these scores of unprotected young men and women, and he was wondering whether he should not go beyond what he had already done. This is an illustration of our text. The good master is not content with paying his wage. He is not content

with what he has already done ; he is constantly looking out for more. So it is with domestic servants. They are brought into such close contact with those whom they serve, that in many cases they become their friends. This is a fellowship which can only grow under the fostering care of Christianity. It is very true that there are always two sides to all these arrangements ; and we do not forget this, because we are only at present concerned with one of them. But if Christianity permeated all classes of society we should never see servants becoming mere hands or drudges, for they would, be fellow-helpers in the great work of the world which by some means has to be done. And already what changes we are witnessing ! The number of those who act from high motives is greatly increasing. There are bad servants and bad employers of labour, both male and female ; but we must not forget the vast number of those who are endeavouring to do their duty, as in God's sight, in all classes of the community.

*Doing the will of God.* Many have surrendered their work on the ground that it was a contravention of the Divine law. A gunmaker in Birmingham gave up his trade, because he did not

think it right for men to shoot their fellow creatures. Many publicans, and some brewers, have done the same for fear of offending against God.

A man I knew, abstained from investing a small sum of money in the General Omnibus Company, because at that time the company used to make many of their men work sixteen to seventeen hours a day. Some have refused to invest their savings in certain railways which made great gain out of Sunday excursion trains. If conscience may make men abstain from certain forms of work, it may also lead them to undertake other means of using their energy. For the will of God is not merely prohibitive ; it is also positive. Trade and work are as much a part of his will as faith, hope, and love, though belonging to different parts of our activity. The good master is a representative of God to his servants. He does God's will and is God's ambassador. What does God require? That requirement he is bound to carry out. God commands us to use this earth for man's benefit ; to till the soil so that food is produced ; to dig in the earth so that fuel is obtained ; to spin the cotton, and to weave the wool ; to carry merchandise over the sea and land. All this is

distinctly the will of God. It may not all be written in the Bible, but it is written on the face both of man and the world.

But behind this material work there is a higher one which has to be done ; and of this purpose the master is in some measure the instrument in God's hands. It is that the persons who carry on this work shall in the process be educated as His sons. Character is the great end of creation and of Providence. It is true that the work must be done ; but not so as to deteriorate character. The servant is not yours ultimately, but is the Lord's ; and both the servants (*i.e.* master and servant) will have to stand side by side before the One Lord in the judgment day. To forget this is to forget one essential of the relation between two persons. It is not sufficient that servants do their work efficiently, and get enough to clothe and feed them. Something more is to be expected from moral and spiritual beings. It is not enough that the collier gets the black coal in sufficient quantities to fill our fires and furnaces. The labourer's home is to be the concern of all ; and if there is any labour which condemns men to be little better than animals, then manifestly the will of God is not accomplished in their case. It may

be a long time before we trace out the real causes of the mischief, and apply the remedies which are needed ; but the one thing which the good master never does is to fold his hands in acquiescence with this state of heathenism at his own doors. It needed a Mrs. Browning to call attention to the condition of many of the child workers at our pits ; it takes many a reformer to make us see that in sweating dens and workshops and in nail-making centres, the condition of woman is a disgrace to our civilization. The remedy which Paul proposes is drastic, though a very slow one. It is that each Christian master and mistress shall try every day to do the will of God in relation to those entrusted to them. What a new and human interest would be developed in the servants of the nation if this were done by us all ! It is a principle which is constant in its application, and which pervades all that we do. It is not always easy to see what the will of God is. But this is a part of the discipline of life to which we must submit, so that our spiritual faculties may be duly exercised and educated. Were it possible to see at a glance what wages were the just ones to give, or to see without difficulty what we ought to do under any given circumstances, we should miss much trouble, but we should also lose much



valuable education. Yet the difficulty is not so great as we may at first think ; for masters ought to be able to take their difficulties to God in prayer ; and if they do so they would soon find that their way was made clear. For it is not alone our religious concerns that we are to bring to God, but also those which are domestic and social. And when these are thus made matters of prayer, then the motives of our conduct become much clearer to ourselves than they were before. We cannot deceive God by mere pretences that we are doing all we can for those who depend upon us. We are obliged to be sincere, and at once the white light of sincerity makes us true to our God. This is what we need in all our relations of life ; and we need it most of all where, as in the relation of masters to servants, self-interest may play such a powerful part. For the most part, love will help us to see our duty as parents or children ; as brothers or sisters ; but when it is chiefly a question of right and justice then we seem to need a guidance which is most direct and imperative. If this relation is ever to be perfect, then both masters and servants must become Christian.

II. WHAT MASTERS ARE TO BE is only hinted at, and yet it is sufficiently stated.

They are to forbear their customary threatening. There are few who can properly carry a weight of power. The sense that others are in their keeping, and are in a measure at their mercy, is a sore hindrance to the growth of the Christian character. Slavery induced a slavish fear on the part of the servants; but it brought what was far worse to the masters, viz. an arrogance and a despotism which were incompatible with the highest manhood. There must indeed be strength for the proper discharge of the duties of masterhood; hence the saying that many make good servants but bad masters. But this strength is quite compatible with gentleness and meekness. Christ was the strongest specimen of manhood which the world has ever seen; but He was also the gentlest. His followers have first of all to imitate this virtue, before they can find rest unto their souls.

III. THE MOTIVES ARE HERE SET FORTH VERY CLEARLY.

Recollection of the one Divine Lord who is over all, and also of the essential value of the human soul.

There is here a play upon the word Master which we are in danger of losing. The word "Lord" is used in both cases, to designate the

earthly master and also the heavenly One. Christ is our Lord. What a wonderful Lord He is! What beautiful service He asks from us! What glorious wages He gives us! How kind He is to the old servants in His household, never turning them off, but always giving them a pension of eternal kindness! This is a wonderful bond between man and man, the bond of everlasting love. Justice undoubtedly exists in Christ; but it is not, perhaps, of this that the apostle is here thinking, but rather of the love of the Lord who for our sakes became a servant that He might win us to eternal life. And it is in Him that we see the essential value of the human soul. Every man is made in the image of God; and, when we think of this great fact, we cannot afford to do any wrong to man's nature. And we dare not do it. It was said of the slave, that he was God's image carved in ebony. This sentiment could only have arisen from the influence of Christianity. In fact, the treatment here inculcated by the apostle Paul was in reality the death-blow to all slavery. And the same conduct will be equally fatal to all that we lament in the present social condition of our loved country. It was said of the ghost in *Hamlet*—

“We do it wrong, being so majestic,  
To offer it the show of violence ;  
For it is as the air, invulnerable,  
And our vain blows malicious mockery.”

This should also be said of human nature in all its forms. We should never despise it, and thus show our own want of insight. Every man, be he a serf or tyrant, is worth to God more than words can tell. Behind a common exterior there is the very image of the Most High. If we despise or neglect that image, we are desecrating the very temple of the Deity. And if any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy. We must beware. We are on dangerous ground. But we must rejoice also, for the name servant or minister is now the highest that a man can have, if only he be the servant of God. This great change has been wrought by Him who became a slave for our redemption. There is no height to which human nature may not climb, short of the throne of God. Many that are last in our estimation will doubtless be first. It is to be noted that the New Testament always inculcates the lowliest duties from the highest motives. And in this connection our attention is called to the nature of our Divine Lord. It is necessary for the full development of the

character that we should think of Him, not only as our Saviour, but also as our Master in heaven. There is no respect of a person's mere outward position with Him, but a clear insight into motive and meaning which makes Him deal with perfect justice with all those who are under Him. And in this life His justice is at work as certainly as it will be in the day of judgment. If, then, men love Him as Saviour, they will be afraid to offend Him as their Lord, and in every relation of life they will seek to please Him. Their sense of justice, quickened by the righteousness of Christ, and their love generated by the mercy of the Redeemer, will both unite and make them good masters.

IX.

THE GOOD SERVANT.



## CHAPTER IX.

### THE GOOD SERVANT.

THE tone of the Bible is very tender, and at the same time very firm towards servants. All through its pages a certain consideration was shown to them, which was quite new in the history of labour. No subject warns us so emphatically as this to search for general principles. Exclusive attention to details led men to defend slavery itself and all its abominations by means of texts taken from Holy Writ. They forgot that the several books of the Bible took on them their own colour from the social age in which they were written. The inspired writers of these books took for granted the social facts by which they were surrounded, and they did not dream of freedom for the slave ; but they urged the servant to make the best of the condition in which he found himself placed.

We must therefore seek to disentangle the local



circumstances from the eternal truths of right and justice revealed in the Holy Scriptures, or otherwise we shall be found erecting mere temporary rules into the place of unchanging principles, and thus we should wrest the Scriptures to the destruction of the social fabric in which we live.

The exhortations to servants have to be read in the light of those which are given to masters ; for they are complementary to one another, and the one cannot be understood without the other. The bad master can hardly expect to have a perfect servant. The unfaithful servant cannot expect that his master will act at all times with consideration, or with even-handed justice. These commandments to servants are now read and pondered in a civilized land, governed by a free parliament ; and things which were tolerable in the first century under a Roman despotism are not now possible. Moreover we have a revelation of God which is new and overwhelming ; for He is the Father of the human race, and though all do not yet recognize their sonship, nor rise above the condition of spiritual slaves, yet the knowledge that God is the Father of all makes an immense difference in the relation of masters and servants.

In order to illustrate this line of observation let us think, *e.g.* of the way in which the clear, concise

command to be obedient is now qualified by circumstances and conditions which did not exist in New Testament times. In the first century slaves were compelled to obedience by the prison, by torture, and by the fear of death. Paul wished them to obey from higher motives; and the play of these motives was calculated to mitigate their lot. But amid the larger liberty of modern times we see three things.

1. God must be obeyed at all hazards. Slaves could not leave their owners; but servants in our times can change their place, and this change must be effected at all risks if there is any injustice or unrighteousness in the demands made by the master. Should he require the servant to tell a lie, or to cheat, or to adulterate the goods sold, then the servant is bound to disobey the earthly master in order that he may obey the heavenly.

2. The labourer is worthy of his hire. He has at least the right to subsist by his labour. This was conceded under slavery itself; for it was not to the despot's interest to allow his serfs to droop and lose their strength. A good feed was as necessary to the man as to the horse; for without it neither could do a day's work. The human machine, if for a moment we may speak thus of a fellow creature, must be kept in good order.

Add to the "good feed" a decent house, a few hours of rest and leisure, the power of supporting wife and children when the man is of mature age, and you have what is now called a "living wage." This is doubtless an elastic term, very difficult of definition, mainly because it changes with every fluctuation of climate and of outward circumstance; but we know by a kind of instinct when a man is not receiving enough for the decencies of life, and we feel that in such a case John the Baptist's advice to the soldiers of his time to be content with their wages is by no means applicable. For nature itself teaches that every man has the right to be fed at the expense of his own labour; for it is clearly proved that the work of one man expended on the soil is enough to feed several other persons besides himself. The earth is bounteous; it is society that is grudging.

3. Obedience is qualified in these times by the right of servants to combine in order to obtain just wages and shorter hours of service—things which in their individual capacity they would be quite helpless to get. Though this right is conceded by many very grudgingly, yet the fact that masters combine for trade purposes, and that all the professions are for very good reasons close corporations, is quite a sufficient reply to all cavils.

What has to be noted is that outside these combinations of masters and men alike, there has grown up a public opinion more or less enlightened, and which has been slowly but surely permeated by Christian sentiment. This outside sentiment is much needed; for all trade combinations are the result of the self-regarding emotions of our nature, and need therefore to be modified and regulated by something more disinterested than themselves. The combinations themselves are a new form of social life, growing perhaps out of the guilds of the Middle Ages, but certainly quite unlike anything which existed in New Testament times.

The Prayer-book, in its teaching as to social life, is in part inspired by the spirit of mediæval ages. It often breathes the air of feudalism and needs revision in the light of that sturdy independence of character which, with all its mistakes, is the direct growth of Christian teaching.

And yet the times are not so changed as to supersede the honest, faithful sayings by which the Bible seeks to keep those of us who are servants in the path of duty. I say "us," for in common with the greatest of the land, ministers of religion are servants by their very name, receiving money for service rendered, and living

in some measure on the offerings of the people. No man ought to be ashamed of receiving wages ; the only thing to be shunned is an indolence which deserves no income.

There are some principles, obedience to which would make us all good servants.

#### I. A GOOD SERVANT TRIES TO DO GOOD WORK.

As to time, this is not his own. He has sold a certain number of hours to another, and those hours are to be spent in that master's service and for his benefit. What are hours, but a succession of things done. Time has no meaning apart from the acts which are strung together by our energy. Let a man sleep, and time ceases to be. Let a man indulge in day-dreams, and the clock may have struck, but he himself has put forth no grappling-hooks which join him to the day. The master's time is, therefore, only another way of stating the actual work which has to be done and the operations which have to be gone through. The factory bell rings in vain if the factory has made nothing. The man who brings an idle body or mind to the place of work is deceiving himself if he calls himself a worker, and for a time he may deceive his employer.

The material of the thing produced bears upon

it the mark of the good worker. All human labour is directed to the transformation of the raw stuff which nature supplies, and the character of the man stamps itself upon the change which is wrought. The late Henry Simon's father, a builder, found that during his absence his workmen scamped a piece of wall, which, being under the ground, they thought would not be seen. Mr. Simon had the wall pulled down and rebuilt; for it was a shameful thing, he said, to put in a piece of bad work because it could not be seen. When men and women do less than their best for any cause they are bad workmen. The temptation may come through a trades' union, or still more likely through natural indolence, or through a desire after quick returns; but its tendency is to make wretched workers and slipshod work. Ladies are begging that home-made silks may be purchased; but they would be better employed in seeing that the home industries turn out better material than the foreign products. It is to this that each worker must address himself, and that the country as a whole must pay the strictest attention. Bad things may be puffed into notice for a time, but they do not last. The stitches come out. The cloth is not well woven. The book is not well bound. The fire is not

carefully laid and will not burn up. The building was not secure in its foundations, and hence the crack. In Lancashire we say that the thing was not "jannock." The good workman is known by his work.

As to "manner" something may be said. Paul says that a servant should work "heartily," *i.e.* "from the soul." So reads the margin. Many work from the tips of the fingers, or from the elbow, or from the shoulder. But Paul would have us put soul into what we do. The work in which men take no pride does not call forth their soul. The machine must not be allowed to rule out the mind. The worker who rejoices in his finished labours is the one who is most likely to succeed. He stands over what he has done in a kind of glow and triumph. It may be a pic or a portrait, a boot or a steamship, a bonnet or a railway engine; the worker feels an enthusiasm about what he has accomplished which he cannot express. During the process he is like the village blacksmith described by Longfellow: the sparks fly, the hammer resounds, the face is a fiery red, the eyes are lighted up with joy, the voice trolls forth some song, because the man loves his work.

II. HE MAKES THE BEST OF HIS CIRCUMSTANCES.

This does not mean that he settles down, making no move to find a more congenial sphere. It is true that the restlessness of modern life, as well as the ease with which we can move from one town or city to another, form a strong temptation to dissipation of energy ; but it is sometimes necessary to look out for a change, and the wolf cannot be kept from the door without a spirit of enterprise. Still, it is well to remember the old-fashioned virtue of contentment, as well as the important one of patience. The tools may be imperfect ; but we know what kind of workman quarrels with these. We have all met with the handy man who, out of a piece of wood or old iron, has made himself an instrument by which an ingenious piece of work was done. Other men bemoaned their hard fate, ran away because they were asked to make bricks without straw ; but this one turned to and did what was wanted.

Perhaps you have not the best of employers. He is too expectant ; he is always finding fault ; he never speaks a word of encouragement ; he gives no holidays ; he is exacting ; he expects impossibilities ; in fact, he is most "peculiar." Yet the ingenuity of the servant is often brought out the more clearly under such circumstances. Naaman was in some respects a bad master.



Disease had probably irritated him, so that his servants were for the most part afraid to speak to him. But the little Syrian maid let some words drop to the wife, his better half in reality, and the wife telling her husband his life was saved. How ingenious! Then he had another servant who risked a great deal in speaking faithfully to him about the prophet's command; and he was persuaded to dip seven times in Jordan. Here was a man saved by the ingenuity of a little girl, and by the faithfulness of another in his employ.

Doubtless a good master tends to make a good servant. Some do not deserve to be well served, and some do. We had better not criticize too closely. It is our wisdom to take men as we find them, and to make the best of them. Still, even with an unkind master, with long hours and low wages, the servant may try to make the best of his circumstances. He may sing at his work, and wait and hope for better days.

It would often help servants to make the best of things if they would remember that their masters have their own great anxieties. They are not always in the easy-chair, and wearing the soft slippers. The household has to be managed by the thrift and forethought of the wife; she has to practise a thousand arts to please everybody,

and to make the money go as far as she can. Nor is it otherwise with the owner of a business, large or small. The demands made on the nervous energy of the capitalist are very considerable ; and this will be remembered by those who speak about him before they conclude that it is all sunshine for the employer, and all shade and sorrow for the employé. Many workers in the receipt of regular wage are far happier and far more free from carking care than some masters who, driven from one expedient to another, hardly know how to maintain their position in the labour market.

### III. THE GOOD SERVANT IS FAITHFUL TO GOD.

As to his own body, he is consecrated. The physical part of our nature is God's property. Man, therefore, only owns and uses it as one who is entirely dependent on God's goodness for its continued existence and health. It is never to become the man's master, or he would then be the slave of his own flesh. By temperance in eating and drinking, by thrift, by self-control, by chastity, by moderation in amusements, he recognizes that the body has to be yielded as an instrument of righteousness to God.

As to his work, he feels that this has been

given to him by God. If he discovers that he is doing devil's service, and sees that what he is doing is only deteriorating, defacing and destroying his fellow-creatures, then he knows that he is a worthless and unprofitable servant. He may labour hard, but he has the devil as his employer, and will have him as his paymaster.

He may easily know whether he is faithful to God ; for there are certain marks about his toil which will tell him.

1. His work should minister to man's wholesome wants, and should tend to make society happier. The ultimate end of work is not its wages as we count wages. Its final purpose is to be read in what it does to promote the welfare of man. Money is not, therefore, to be the sole test of the real worth of his labour ; for there may be little of this, and yet the work may have accomplished much. This is a point at which all toilers should steadily look ; not how much do I *get* for my sweat of body or brain, but how much do I, by means of my toil, *give*. The getting is important, but the giving is essential. It is this latter consideration which releases trade from being a mere sordid instrument for obtaining money ; for the good trader is a great benefactor to society. The man who, as either employer or as servant, does

lasting good to the community, is as certainly approved by the Great Taskmaster as is the missionary or the evangelist, if only he works from the right motive. And thus it comes about that our daily task is linked on to religion, and becomes a part of it.

2. The work should discipline and educate the worker himself. It induces and sustains habits of industry ; and these constitute the best armour we could possibly wear against many of the worst forms of evil. It fires him with the joy of reward : not that which merely comes through the legitimate payment of his toil, though this is not to be despised, but that which is put into his heart and character by God Himself. God is the Great Worker ; and reconciliation with Him means, among other things, that the man accepts thankfully the conditions of his earthly lot as one of incessant labour. And this acceptance is a source of deep and truest peace while he passes along the dusty roads of duty ; and at the goal he sees his Heavenly Father beckoning him to a felicity which is the result of good and faithful service, and which, apart from this, could not be discovered, because the faculty would not have been developed in the soul. Life may be hard, toil a drudgery, difficulty almost insurmountable, temptation hot

as the flames of a furnace ; but at the end there stands the Saviour of all, and in the Father's great name He will receive the believing worker to that Father's joy. What is that joy? A new heaven and a new earth, which we have humbly sought to build up on the foundation of pure and unselfish labour for society.

“And now we fight the battle,  
And then we wear the crown.”

Let us try to picture to ourselves what England would be if the relations of the industrial world were what the principles of the New Testament would have them be. Perhaps we grow sceptical at the very thought, and say that if God would open windows in heaven then these things might be. But we forget what an immense advance has already taken place in the history of the world through the introduction and spread of Christian principles. In our day and memory we have seen America turned into a different country through the liberation of the slaves. We often think of human affairs as though they were ruled by an iron destiny. But the will of man is much stronger than we suppose, and its power is shown in utterly changing the circumstances of the social life around us. The feudalism of the Middle Ages

has passed away for ever ; the slavery of the West Indies has given place to free labour ; the coloured population of the United States has received the franchise of a free nation ; the Factory Acts have entirely altered for the better the conditions of many of the people of our own land. Why, then, should we despair of seeing similar changes in the near future ? We have but to desire those changes with an intensity which will lead us to will them, and the new industrial world will be created.

It is here that we see how eminently practical Christianity may in the right hands become. For our religion is the introduction of a new and of a higher spirit. It means that we shall recognize one another as belonging to a vast brotherhood. It removes that hardness from our hearts which grows there by the merely business relationships of life ; and it shows us how to treat one another as the children of the one common Father. The very essence of Christianity is seen in the fact that Christ, who was Lord of all, became the Servant of all in order that He might be their Saviour. In this He has given us a true insight into the very heart of God, and has shown us what we must become if we are the children of God. When this spirit of sonship is carried by us into all the various relationships of life, then a new

and a glorious world will be created around us, and earth will become like heaven. For heaven is filled with servants, only they do not labour in a servile spirit. Not to abolish servitude did our Lord come in the flesh, but to exalt it till it became like His own great ministry of providence and redemption. "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." The man only then becomes a good servant when he learns what it is to be a child of God. "Henceforth I call you not servants, but friends."

X.

THE GOOD FATHER AND  
MOTHER.





## CHAPTER X.

### THE GOOD FATHER AND MOTHER.

THERE is no relation which throws the soul more on God than that of a parent. For it is certain that the child is, in a large measure, made by what the parents are, and certainly not by what they merely wish to be, or still less by what they only profess to be. A parent is at all points compelled to inquire into his own character. He feels that he carries the destinies of his children right on through this world to the next. What are his children to become? The reply depends in a large measure on what he himself is. For at all points and at every moment he is exercising influence at the most impressionable time of the child's life.

The parent cannot, if he would, escape from this perpetual responsibility, so long as the son or daughter remains under the roof-tree. The powers of the father and mother surround the child like

an atmosphere, and just as the child's physical health depends on the purity of the air which is drawn into its lungs, so its moral well-being is promoted or hindered by the sort of environment in which it finds itself all the day long. How necessary, then, is it for the parent to ask, "What am I?" On this depends, under God, the eternal future of the souls committed to us. Many a man who has not given himself to Christ when He has called him in ordinary ways, has felt the power of that call when it has come through his own children. A vain and silly woman, who has had no thought, except for the passing fashions of the world, has been known to listen to the higher voices when she has gazed into the face of her little babe.

Yet it is necessary to recall the exact precepts which are given us in the Holy Scripture on parental duties, lest with all our good-will we fail to do our duty towards those who are so dear to us. A striking verse is found in Ephesians vi. 4: "And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord."

The true purpose of parental life is here pointed out, and at the same time a danger is shown, and a duty is inculcated.

The purpose is that the children may be the

Lord's. They are already His by the love of God and by the redemption which has been wrought for them on Calvary by a crucified Saviour. But as they are endowed with the awful gift of free-will it is necessary that they should themselves choose what their relation to Christ shall be. All the effort, therefore, of education and of home influence is to be bent in the earnest endeavour to lead them to choose Christ as their Master and Redeemer. It is here that we need in these days to be very careful as to the influences with which the young are surrounded, and as to the means which we take for the desired end. For it is clear that this end must be paramount in the thoughts of the parents, or they will not be in the endeavours which they make. A carelessness will most assuredly creep into the life if there be laxity in the thought, and if parents think that religion may well be postponed to school, to pleasure, to social considerations, and to business prospects, then these thoughts will most certainly make themselves manifest in their actions. There are none so quick to read their own parents' characters as children, for the evident reason that those characters are like an open book before them all the day long. If, therefore, the great purpose of the home-life be anything less than a whole-

hearted consecration of time and soul to the Lord who bought us, that tale will soon unfold itself, and the young will secretly regard all professions of religion as so much diluted hypocrisy—something kept for show and not for use. Nothing preaches the gospel more effectually than the sight of a Christian mother and father. They are “living epistles,” known and read by their own children; and they leave an indelible impression on those children’s hearts through all time. How fondly does memory recur to their virtues in after years! How do the grown sons and daughters delight to recall the looks and words which told them all too well that their parents lived in the unseen world, and had dedicated their heart’s best love to their Saviour! Parents should think of these things while there is yet time to influence the young. They should not lay up by their practical ungodliness years of sad bewailings over opportunities which they have for ever lost. There is One who merits all our love and theirs. It is the greatest theft of which man is capable, to take away that affection from Him who died to save us. Let us not add to that robbery of God the crime of leading the young about us to keep back their hearts from Him who has always been their best Friend.

*A danger* is pointed out when the apostle tells fathers that they are not to provoke their children to wrath. He of course includes mothers in this precept ; but as the father then was the great fountain of all domestic authority, he selects this parent in particular for his advice. We might stop to ask why it is that children are brought up in the same home as parents, for those were not the days of public schools, when children in their earliest years were committed to the care of others. Nor indeed do we find, as a rule, that children are now sent away from home, if we include in our thought the vast majority of English families in our time. The fact is that children can unconsciously teach their parents many valuable lessons. By their young interest in passing events, as well as by their childlike pastimes, they are fitted to take a grave man of business away from his cares, and also to help the mother to shake off her thousand household concerns. But if the parents are so full of their own responsibilities as never to be able to enter into the joys and sorrows of their children, they are themselves missing one of the greatest privileges of home life ; and they are in danger likewise of provoking their children to wrath. The child who always longs for sympathy and finds none at home will have the

heart shut up against the parent ; and in a serious crisis, when it is of vital importance that the fullest confidence should be given by the child, the parent is bitterly disappointed to find a crust of silence and reticence. This is neither good for the parent nor for the child. The child is for the time being bereft of its best adviser, and the parent is without that influence which he might most reasonably hope at all times to possess.

Anything savouring of a harsh or tyrannical mode of government is abhorrent to Christianity in the State, in the Church, and much more in the home. There must indeed be authority wherever obedience is exacted, but this should be veiled in love ; nay, it should be the authority of affection. The Old Testament precepts are very applicable to the times in which they were given ; but as we have entered on other and better days, we should seek to interpret and to modify them in the light of the love of God, as it is revealed in the Person and teaching of Christ our only Lord.

There are many ways of irritating the temper and of spoiling the character of a child, and men should so remember them as to be forewarned and forearmed. To speak words of discouragement instead of those of hope is a sure way to hinder the progress of a young person. To dwell

on defects in the body, or to make too much of mental slowness, is always wrong. The young are peculiarly sensitive to ridicule, but they are easily put in good heart by a few words of encouragement. Sympathy with their life will tell parents, as by an instinct, in what way their confidence can best be won. And when it is won, it is a very important thing to keep it. For on this, rather than on any authority which we may possess, depends our power of helping them to become wise men and women.

Of greater importance still is it that parents should not alienate their children from religion. Some manage to do this without meaning to do it. Indeed, the very earnestness with which good parents desire that their young people may belong to Christ makes them sometimes strain the obedience of the young beyond the proper point. Restraint there must be, but it should be veiled at times by the allurements of religion. Turn the sunny side of the gospel to young minds. Let them see that with every restraint there is associated a great and indescribable joy, and they will be attracted where they could not be judiciously driven. It is true that amusement is not religion ; nor is religion amusing. But they may be led to see that lasting happiness is only to



be obtained by finding their rightful Master. And when they see that Christ is obeyed by their parents out of love, and not by compulsion, they will the more readily and willingly yield themselves to the same Lord. To win them for Christ is a much greater thing than to win them to ourselves ; and in some measure it is easier, since Christ loves them more than we do. When they behold His radiant smile illuminating their lives, they feel that they must love Him. It seems a natural thing for a young heart to love Him who died on the cross out of pity for mankind. Only let us be very careful that our selfish selves do not eclipse the sunlight and prevent it from falling on their young hearts. "Provoke not your children to wrath."

There is a *duty* inculcated on parents. It may be summed up in the one word *discipline*. The apostle means that we are to live the Christian life so that the young may feel that our training of them is directed and inspired by the Lord Himself. This is the significance of the phrase *in the Lord* or *of the Lord*. They are to see in their elders the example of all that they ought to become. This loads parents with a tremendous responsibility ; for they may be sure that the

young in the home will observe what they do, and make their own comment on what they hear their parents say.

There must of necessity be the assistance of many others in the training of the young. Mental and moral rearing cannot be done wholly by the hard-working father or by the mother with her many cares. The help of others has not only to be sought, but to be welcomed with gratitude. No parent can single-handed train his own child. This being recognized in things secular, it should also be in things sacred. Hence the influences of the sanctuary should be most carefully respected. Aids from all sources in literature, in classes, in schools, both day and Sunday, should be earnestly looked for and valued beyond fine gold. In some respects the older generation is a vast combination for the training of the next. We are getting the world ready for them, and getting them ready for the world. We hope to make our institutions sounder, and to make our offspring better men and women than ourselves.

But this can only be done by having an ideal before our own minds and hearts up to which we strive to live. And that ideal is in Christ Himself. If we could implore Him to live in our home every day, we should then have all joy and

all guidance, and all the deep happiness which our hearts require. We must, then, often speak to Him and often think about Him. He is now in heaven, and there is nothing which children enjoy more than a hymn about the heavenly land. Some, indeed, think that it is a mawkish sentimentality to be thinking of the next world ; but we shall find that the young are our true guides in this matter. For we at least know that there are many young people in heaven, some of our own, it may be, among the number. Therefore heaven is proved to be very near us. If it is so near, why may we not think about it, and, indeed, prepare for it ?

There are dreams in our life when we seem to see the eternal future, and when we behold ourselves gathered at last in that sunny land with all our loved ones around us. What a happy time it will be ! No more sickness shall threaten us ; no more sad farewells have to be said ; no terrible risks have to be confronted ; no death has to be feared ; and for ever we are safe and they. As we look around we feel how beautiful beyond all words is the scene ! After the storms and treacherous waves of this earthly voyage are done, we have come to the eternal haven of peace ; and what gives us more exquisite pleasure is the

thought that all our loved ones are there also! Then every pang and agony of our mortal lot is forgotten in that moment of reunion with those whom for awhile we have lost from view. Oh, happy hour! Who can paint it? Oh, serene and sunny shore! Who would not undergo all the hardness of earth's discipline to be fit for such a continent of joy?

But of that world how true it is that it is a prepared place for a prepared people! And where could we better get ready than in a Christian home? For that is a truly Christian home all of whose inmates are obedient to their Lord and King. If obedience is the kernel of their happiness, it must be of ours also. There can be no discipline worth the name unless the will be curbed. If the young are led to think that they are supreme in the home-life, and that their interests must be consulted rather than those of their elders, then are we laying up in store for them a harvest of misery in days to come. Indulgent parents are the worst enemies that children could possibly have. They spoil the temper, loosen principle, and set up a wrong and sinful standard of conduct before their minds, which in future life they will perhaps never shake off.

But, then, it is equally important that the parents

themselves should be amenable to the law of Christ. They are not ultimate in their authority. It is only as they reflect in their lives the spirit of Christ, that they ought to expect to win the "honour" and respect which are their due as parents. The life of Christ was one of the utmost self-sacrifice for the good of men, and when that life is lived over again in those who profess His Name, then we may expect the millennium to dawn. For the home is one of the essential instruments through which God is bringing a new order into our world. We see how little politics can accomplish, because they have to do mainly with the outward condition of men; but the home touches and changes the inward spirit. All our greatest workers of righteousness came from the moulding hand of a good mother. Augustine, Luther, Wilberforce, Wesley, Whitefield, Carey, Martyn, and a host of others, both well known and little known, came out of homes where they learned how both to love God and man. So that we may truly say that the fathers and mothers of England are the real rulers of our country. They can make or mar the future destiny of our land, and in doing so they can determine the fate of the world. But lest we should be appalled at the greatness of our responsibilities, we must remember the promises

of help and glory which are ours at all times of need. God is for us if we be on His side. Let not parents expect their children to go wrong; but, while conscious of dangers, let them always believe that they will go right, because Jesus is the Shepherd of both old and young. He will bring us all at last, if we be but faithful, to the heavenly fold. Then, as we look round and find all our dear ones with us there, what an inexpressible joy will flow through our souls as we exclaim, "Not one, O Lord, has lost his way! We are all safe home at last!"



XI.

THE GOOD SON AND DAUGHTER.





## CHAPTER XI.

### THE GOOD SON AND DAUGHTER.

THE prophet Zechariah, looking at an almost empty city, said, "And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof" (Zech. viii. 5). Jerusalem had been rebuilt under Nehemiah; but there were only fifty thousand people scattered about the country, and of these only a small proportion was to be found in the city itself. In order to prosperity a larger population was necessary. The neighbourhood of Jerusalem was in the condition of some of our colonies, where there are not hands enough to till the soil and to raise the food which lies latent in the ground. What is wanted in the north-west of Canada is what this preacher promised should be the future of Jerusalem, viz. that there should be plenty of boys and girls. As we have this delightful state of things in our own land with its teeming cities, it is our duty to

discover how far and in what way this may be turned to our advantage. In one word, we may consider what constitute good sons and daughters. When our streets are full of these, then we may be sure that a golden age of happiness is near for both Church and State.

THEY ARE HERE, NOT FOR THE SAKE OF THE FUTURE ONLY, BUT FOR THE SAKE OF THOSE OLDER THAN THEMSELVES. How dull would the world be if there were no young people in it! At first it seems as though we moved in a perpetual circle. We were ourselves trained to take our part in the battle of life, and now it is our turn to train others; and so it will go on till the world shall end. This seems very much like fate, but it is not. The movement is not a circle, but a spiral staircase by which we are as a race ascending higher and higher, till we reach the point of perfection which our Creator intends us to attain. The elders have a great deal to do for the younger portions of the community, but they have also a great deal to learn from them.

There is abundant vitality in the young, and their very touch makes all who are sympathetically near them feel a thrill of joy. It is much that they are here to teach us such a great and necessary lesson as that of joy. Men and women grow

dull and careworn with the work and disappointments of life, and are hardly able to bear up against all the ills to which they are exposed. Then all at once they hear the laughter of the young, and they feel that a breath of heavenly happiness has blown across their tired spirits, and they are themselves young again. What an unspeakable blessing this is in our dull and weary strife! None can know what it is but those who have been for a long time away from the young. It is said that there was a god who used to renew his strength by a periodical visit to the earth. As soon as he touched mother-earth again he felt his strength and hope revive. This is what sailors after a long voyage feel. They have seen none but the captain and the crew, and when they look upon the faces of children again an unspeakable delight fills their hearts. Heaven itself is dependent on the presence of the young for some of its joy, or otherwise it would not please the Almighty Father to call to Himself so many of those who have not yet commenced to take their share in the toils and triumphs of this mortal life. Certainly we ourselves are very dependent on their mirth for our own. But for moral and spiritual qualities we are also their debtors. They often teach us to think only of the present, and

neither to be wrapped up in the past nor to be very anxious about the future. They live in the joyous present, and are content to receive the blessings which come to them from every hour which passes over their heads. Why should we not do the same? They tell us what a life of faith is. They believe. Why should we not do the same? They show us what love is. And we need to know that it is the very light of our own life.

Good sons and daughters should be healthy; for if they are not, how can they be ready for the hard strain of life? They are represented by Zechariah as playing in the streets, and this is a pretty picture of healthy recreation and of strength. It is said that lawn-tennis has saved the middle-class mothers of the future from deterioration, and the saying has a great deal of truth in it. Whatever tends to the development of the bodily faculties in due subordination to those of the mind is a great advantage. Doubtless the pendulum swings very swiftly in the athletic direction, but better that than that we should rear a generation of slothful masses of flabby flesh and fat. Let there be some muscle in our young men and maidens, and there would be a safeguard against many of the temptations

which are to be found in all our large towns and cities. Fresh air in our homes and churches, and flowing freely through our lungs, is one of the best preservatives against a false and morbid view both of the meaning of our presence here, and of the nature of the good and great Being who rules our destiny. To deface, to mar, to destroy, to lacerate, to pinch, or to pamper our bodies,—all this is to show great irreverence to the only material organization which can be rightly called the “Temple of the Holy Ghost.” There is a religion of the body which, if ever learned at all, has to be learned in youth. It consists in keeping clean and pure that which God so graciously chooses out to be His own dwelling-place. And it is not to be learned in the cloisters of any Ritualistic scheme whatsoever. It comes not by fasting from the prime necessities of food, air, water, and healthful exercise; but by keeping under the body, through the cutting off of mere luxuries, and by the use of the body as an instrument of righteousness.

They should be happy. David was of a ruddy countenance, and was well favoured through his open-air life, and as a consequence he was a happy lad, and continued so till sorrow and sin robbed him of this precious jewel. There are quiet

dispositions among all ages. These are sent to us so that the noisy may receive rebuke, and may not rule the world of home any more than they should rule the larger world of politics. But if the spirits droop and the mind grows moody in the son or daughter, then, the health being good, the will should arouse itself and find an occupation which will make cheerfulness beam from the face, and laughter gleam from the eye. Who that bows his head down as a bulrush, or chirps alone like a sparrow upon the housetop, or chatters like a crane in the desert, does any good in the home or in society? Good humour is one of the first requisites of wholesome living.

Payment for all the care that is given to sons and daughters would not be acceptable, even if it could be made in the current coin of the realm; but it comes with sweetest grace, and is a much-needed medicine to the old, when it is rendered in the form of cheerfulness. Young voices should be fond of song; young fingers should be ready for music; young faces should be wreathed with smiles; young hands should be swift in ministries of love; young minds should be fertile in surprises of self-sacrifice. To forget self is the way to learn the duties of early life, and, in order that we may do this, God has put us just where

we can do it most effectually and constantly. In the home there is an abundant call for the exercise of cheerfulness. Bright but not biting speech ; tones tender as the cooing of turtle-doves ; looks as serene as a summer sky ; actions as fragrant as early violets ;—these sum up much of the happiness of home.

What will make a boy happy ? What will make a girl happy ? Suppose we turn these questions inside out, and ask what sons and daughters can do to make others happy, have we not then done the very best thing in order to answer our question ? Sometimes they are treated so that they feel that they are not wanted in the world. But this is a great mistake. They are wanted now. They are not merely people of the future, but of the present. They sometimes get tired of being told that they have great promise in them. Can they not do something now ? Is there nothing that they can give, or plan, or actually accomplish before the years of youth slip by, and they too become men and women with the cares of the older people on their shoulders ? Yes, much every way. They are wanted to make others happy. If at the end of the day they have not succeeded in this simple thing, then the day must be regarded as a wasted one.



Let us specify some of the ways in which sons and daughters can enter on this ministry of usefulness, and give illustrations both from the Bible and from actual modern days.

First let us listen to what a modern poet tells us about the different stages of youth. Of boyhood he says—

“Where’er thou art, O boyhood, thou art free  
And fresh as the young breeze in summer born,  
On sun-kissed hills, or on the laughing sea,  
Or gay bird-music breathing of the morn,  
Or some sweet rosebud pearled with early dew,  
As brief and fair as you.”

Of Youth he says—

“Where’er thou art, though earthy oft and coarse,  
Thou bearest with thee hidden springs of force,  
Creative power, the flower, the fruitful strife,  
The germ, the potency of life,  
Which draws all things to thee unwittingly.”

Of Maidenhood he sings—

“But lo ! another form appears  
Upon the glass. Oh, pure and white !  
Oh, delicate and bright !  
Oh, primal growth of time !  
Sweet maidenhood ! that to a silvery chime  
Of music, and chaste fancies undefiled,  
And modest grace and mild,  
Comest, best gift of God to men.”\*

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\* Lewis Morris.

When we turn to the Bible for guidance as to youth, we find that this book is practical rather than poetical. It does not describe an ideal state, but it seeks to produce one. And this it does by telling parents to teach their children the commandments of God. This is laid down emphatically in the Book of Deuteronomy. And the fifth commandment is very explicit as to the duty of sons and daughters, for they are told to obey their parents. This, of course, takes for granted that the parents are themselves obedient to God; and also that they will have the discernment to see at what age they may safely remove some of the restrictions of home-life. Still, the Bible insists that, if youth is to realize the ideal of God, it must be a life of obedience to law. There is nothing more dangerous than the supposition that a son or a daughter knows all that ought to be done, and has all needful strength to engage in the mighty plan of life, as it is unfolded in the precepts and character of Jesus Christ.

And the first thing that is needed in a good son or daughter is that the soul should be loyal to Christ. If, in the locomotive engine, the driving-wheel receives damage, all other parts will be unworkable. So there is a central duty in every life, and this has to be done if the heart is to be

purified from all its many imperfections. What we mean by the conversion of the young, brought up in Christian homes, is that their prayers and purposes should be turned in constant earnestness to our Heavenly Father.

Conversion is a willing turning towards Christ. It may be a turning away from a want of thought, and the beginning of seriousness in the life. In essence it is the fixing of the heart's love and trust on Jesus our Saviour. There are many who in very early days begin to love their Lord. They hear of the Redeemer's love to them, and their young hearts are eager to love Him in return. This is conversion, and the change shows itself in the whole round of practical life.

Young Samuel was an example of the way in which a boy said his prayers with reality and earnestness. He was rewarded with a reply from God Himself. He had the inestimable advantage of having a good mother, whom he loved, and whom he endeavoured to obey.

On the other hand, Eli's sons went the downward path to destruction, because, although Eli was a religious man, he was not a religious father. He left his sons to do as they liked, and the results were disastrous both to themselves and to all Israel. That time so much desired by all the

young, when they will be allowed to do as they wish, can only be entered upon when there is the fear of God in the heart. To all young men and women it is a time of trial, of testing, and, if we did but know the dangers of the way, a time of tears also. What wonder was it that, when Jacob left home for the first time, he sought God in prayer as he had never done before? It had been enough for him before to look around, but now he began to look up. That upward look is what is wanted in us all. Very clearly and lovingly does God call to you. He comes down to your need, to your heart-life, to your home-life, and to your business-life; and for all your needs He has provided in the grace of Christ. To-day He is surely saying to some, "My son, My daughter, give Me thy heart." Let the ladder of a true prayer be erected now, and let your strong but humble resolution mount it now, and your God will take you by the hand, to lead you all your days.

We may sum up the needs of the younger generation in one word—reverence. This is an age when all things venerable are being questioned, and not always with a deferential tone. It is easy for the young to take up a line of cynicism, or to affirm the liberty which is gradually being

given to them, by a self-assertive attitude towards all things which bear the marks of age. They themselves are young, and they are apt to think that all things in heaven and earth should be young as they. But they are mistaken in this estimate, for all the best things are in essence the old ones. Every true reform is but an effort to return to the original plan which exists in the mind of the great Creator. The home-life is his ordinance, and none can sin against it with impunity. The Church is the creation of our Lord, and no one can even neglect its ordinances without receiving and giving hurt. The nation has been fashioned by His power, and its policy, which sooner or later must be in the hands of our sons and daughters, should be conformed to His will. And the individual, whether found in the humble cottage or in the proud palace, is the temple where He chooses to dwell. Here, therefore, in all these spheres of activity, there is room for the exercise of the deepest reverence. Let it take full possession of the spirits of the young, and we have no fears about the future of our world. They will be the defenders of a lofty ideal of womanhood and of a pure pattern of manhood; they will open the doors of the home to the entrance of Christ; they will form the body-guard of our Lord in the

Church, and fight the great battle of truth and grace in coming days ; and they will build round our country its only sure defence—walls of justice, peace, and religion, against which no enemy can finally prevail.



XII.

THE GOOD HUSBAND.





## CHAPTER XII.

### THE GOOD HUSBAND.

BOTH husband and wife are in the same boat ; they make or mar one another. But we must not forget that they retain their individuality, and that they are separate entities, with responsibilities and capacities all their own. The good husband may have a bad wife, and *vice versâ*. Yet it is true that both kinds usually go together ; for either, in the first instance, they choose according to their original quality, or else they so influence one another that they become strangely alike. The wife has great power to raise her husband, for her influence permeates every nook and corner of the home, and it is there that character receives its most distinct development. It is well that they should, in a large measure, think and feel alike, for a house, divided against itself cannot stand. To a distant observer, they

are like two planets which have coalesced and which form but one bright orb, and yet they are in reality two worlds of thought and feeling which need to be discriminated one from the other. Let us talk, then, first of all of the good husband. Not the perfect one. No doubt some are thought to be so by their own wives. Happy men! It is, however, well to remember that human nature is far from being perfect, and more especially that we ourselves do not contain all the virtues. For it is only by a recollection of this that two or more beings can dwell together in unity. There is a tradition in the book of Enoch that the angels took to themselves wives from among the women on the face of the earth, but the narrator is careful to tell us that they were fallen angels. Otherwise the position would have been intolerable. For how could imperfect women live in amity with perfect angels. We may well, therefore, be thankful that, though there are plenty of good husbands, there are no perfect ones. But then we must not make a mistake here, for the good husband is the one who is on the way to perfection. It must never be supposed that the wife will actually be the gainer by the faults of her spouse, even though those faults be the duplicates of her own. For there are few

things that a man more admires than to see his wife free from the errors into which he himself has fallen, provided she does not prate about her superiority. He loves to see her virtues act as a foil to his own vices, even though they be a continual rebuke to him. Men are led by marble steps up to God, and certainly one of the chief of these is woman's influence. White and pure should that stairway be, so that he may see clearly and find easily his way to the Perfect God.

But though we need not expect him to be as an angel of God, yet we look for certain excellences in his character which will commend him continually to his wife, and which will lead others to know that he is one of the "best of husbands." We are to take for granted that he is a good *man*. For if his relation to God be not that of faith and love, his whole life must be vitiated at its source. "Make the tree good, and the fruit will be good." There is no escape from this law. For he has in charge a spirit capable of endless progress, and, however kind he may be to her social wants, yet if he starves her spirit and hinders her prayers he is doing her a grievous wrong. He may not exactly like the religious side of woman's nature; it savours too much of the emotional to please him.

Yet humanity is composed both of the female and male, and how can he decide for another that what he is pleased to call the emotional is to be cut out of life's plan and out of the capacities of the soul? For this is what he is deciding when he determines to go his own way, and, in doing so, to stand in the path of her religious instincts. The husband who starves his wife is amenable to the law of our country, and he who starves her religious nature will have to answer for his neglect before a tribunal which will deal out even-handed justice at last. The fact is, that the two lives are so closely intertwined that he cannot neglect his own opportunities of religious culture without proving himself in the long run a great hindrance to her development. If not for his own sake, then at first for hers, he will see to it that the religious faculty is not left to struggle on without due nourishment. By-and-by he will come to see that God gave him the woman to supplement and to complement his own deficiencies, and he will learn to be unspeakably thankful for the new visions of the divine life which have been granted to his mind through her faith. The unbelieving husband will be won by the conversation or manner of life of the believing wife, and both will rejoice together

that their union is becoming the beginning of an everlasting fellowship in the Lord.

It is especially at the beginning of married life that these truths need to be remembered; for it is then that the two think that, as they are all in all to one another, therefore they need no other solace than is to be found in one another's company. But the stern discipline of sorrow, and even of death, will not let them rest in this illusion long. God has made them for Himself, and He is not likely to part readily with their allegiance. Consequently, He uses those thousand means which are at His disposal to bring them to a sound and religious mind. If they do not go to church, then the church comes as it were to them, and they hear its truths chimed or tolled out in their hearing by the great bells of human joy and sorrow. Still, it is well when the man and the woman do not wait for these disciplines, but hasten together to the place of private, of household, and of public prayer, in order to meet their Maker and their Father.

We put religion first in the husband, because it will by a kind of instinct teach him how to become all that he ought to be and all that he wants to be. Love to God is to be supreme, and that will inspire him with a true love to his wife.

Yet he will have to look around him and within to see some very common and homely virtues, without which he will not be able to give the joy of which he ought to be the dispenser.

He ought to be a hard *worker*. By means of this the home is kept up in its strength. He ought not to be ashamed of toil as though it were a thing to be done in secret, but he ought to be glad that this part of married life falls to him in particular. To dangle about the house with nothing particular to do, is not what women want to see in men. They are glad to think of them earning an honest livelihood in the battle of life, so long as that war be not too fierce. The wife has to do her work, and she has the right to have a partner in her toil. This applies to the highest as well as to what are called the lowest classes. The husband who spends his earnings in drink, and the one who squanders his time lounging in a club, may be differently clothed, but both are sinning against the first laws of wedded happiness. Human laws may be impotent to sweep away idlers from the community, or to force them to work, but there is a Divine one which most assuredly prevents them from reaping any harvest of real happiness. They miss the point of life, and become mere troughs for receiving food-

supplies. Better to do the veriest drudgery than to fall into this lowest form of incapacity, which disables a man from taking his fair share in the work of this busy world. Let us be sure that the wife suffers not merely in comfort, but in those subtle influences which go to make up character by the wealthy or indigent indolence of the husband.

A certain amount of outside interest should be brought by the husband into the home in order to sweeten its life. To be self-contained is like having all the windows shut, so that there is not sufficient ventilation. We need, therefore, to have brought to bear upon us the larger affairs of humanity. Many make the mistake of shutting off all the affairs of business life from the wife, so that she remains profoundly ignorant of the way in which the money is earned and the home maintained. Not to enter into detail is no doubt a safe and necessary precaution for a man who is utterly tired out with the day's toil ; but there is a medium in all things, and he should be willing to accept sympathy from the best quarter, and to share his triumphs with one so closely associated with all that he does and tries to do. Many men have been saved from great disasters by consulting their wives in critical times, and many a woman



has been saved from extravagant habits by the knowledge that her husband was endeavouring to tide over a difficult place in the business which he had to transact. She is, after all, his comrade in the battle of life, and is willing to bear some of the brunt of the war. He is not able to stand the strain of work and worry all alone, and the knowledge that he can always pour out his troubles into her ear is in itself a wonderful help to him. She becomes the comrade by this confidence ; she grows strong to help him to bear the burden by having the burden placed on her own heart. As two can carry a heavy box by taking each a handle when each would be incapable alone, so it is with the weight of life's cares and worries.

We often congratulate ourselves that we live in an advanced age, and that what was necessary to say to wives and husbands in centuries long ago is not timely now. But on the other hand, we meet with rude awakenings which show us that, however much we may suppose the Bible to be an old-fashioned book, yet it is suited to the ever-recurring wants of the generation as they come and go. For example, when we read that the husbands of Paul's time were told (Col. iii. 19) not to be bitter against their wives, we are at once disposed to question the relevancy of the command

to these enlightened days. We remember that in his time the wife was generally regarded as a kind of domestic slave, who was expected to be a keeper at home and never to wander beyond her own domestic duties. Have we not altered all that in these days of woman's rights and suffrage? Perhaps yes, and perhaps no! Are we so sure that there are no domestic slaves now? We know that in the vast majority of cases the wife has all the labour of the household to perform. The Bible was not really written exclusively for duchesses, or even for those who live in the more comfortable suburbs of our large towns and cities, but for the people at large, and woman everywhere will find her case sympathetically treated in its pages. Men will discover that they are as much in danger of losing their tempers over trifles as were the husbands of Colosse in the first century; and when they find that this is the case in the home, they will take the necessary Christian precautions. For the happiness of home does not consist in the richness of the pile of the carpet, nor in the newness of the fashion of its wall-papers, nor in the æsthetic character of its furniture, but in those little unconsidered trifles of the moment which in reality make the hours, the days, the weeks, the months, and the years as they go. We spend

them as a tale that is told, in little incidents which interest us for a time and then are forgotten, but which in their wholeness leave an impression either pleasant or painful, according to the drift of the story. What we have to do, therefore, is to turn the bitter into sweet by the divine alchemy of love. God preserve us from the hypocrite who is all smiles abroad, but who has only a few blunt words for the wife at home ; who is the " nice " man in society, but who cultivates a nasty temper at home ! If he is bitter at all, let it be against the wrongs of the poor and the terrible injustice of the world ; but let him be sweet as honey to the woman whom he has vowed to love and to cherish " till death us do part." Clamour in the Church and bitterness at home are the sure signs that the man has not yet learned the very elements of a civilized life. When Christ said that we were not to be anxious about food and clothing, I presume that He meant we were to be sweet-tempered if the button was not on the clothes, and if the food was not quite done to a turn ; for it is in these little matters that husbands are most of all tempted to be thrown off their equilibrium, and none of them are so angelic as to be able to say truthfully that they have never been bitter about them.

Let us, however, take a higher flight, and remember with what a solemn simile men are addressed when they are told that husbands should love their wives. The ideal and measure of that love is to be found in the love which Christ bears to His Church. When He gave Himself for the Church, it was with a definite object and with an indefinite expenditure of His very blood. The object was that the Church might be pure and perfect. There should be a purpose in all intelligent love; it should be the elevation of its object. That cannot be true love when the issue is degradation. Christianity at once changed mere liking and lusting into love. The love of the world bringeth death; that is, the love of some men for their wives only lowers their tone and tends to separate them more and more from God. Imagine the case of a woman whose temptation is that of a frivolous life. She likes pleasure and gadding about from place to place. Her fond and foolish husband is considered the very pink of perfection if he yields to her every caprice, and if he gives up any higher tastes of his own in order to pamper her. We do not deny the affection, both intended and actual, in the case supposed; but we believe that he would have acted a nobler part to her if he had made real

sacrifices in order to create and foster those higher tastes whose cultivation can in a measure be carried on by both rich and poor, because they can be pursued at home. He and she would have had a rich reward in a larger life and in mutual possessions which could never be taken away from them.\*

But it is in the kind of love which is here inculcated that we see how much our Creator demands from a man when he assumes this endearing relationship. Christ's love was not one given as ours so often is, in expectation of a return; it was an unconditional surrender of life for the sake of His people. That is the model. But that is also the inspiration and the grace which, while it demands so great a devotion, will also give the needed power to manifest it. It is easy to see the beautiful ideal; it is almost as easy to say that we will be true to it; but it is difficult beyond all mere unaided strength to carry out our fond wishes. Therefore it is that the Saviour becomes not only an example of love, but He bestows the powers of a new life upon those who live in fellowship with His sufferings. It was in those sufferings that He felt His keenest

\* In "Miriam's Schooling" the woman is reclaimed by astronomy!

joys, because He was doing then for His people what they could never do for themselves, and by His death bringing them an unending life of perfect felicity. To have the cross buried as it were in our consciousness, so that it shall at all times move and direct our every act, is the very Spirit of our Lord's religion. And this spirit can only be obtained by solitary and mutual prayer. To those applications of the earnest, Christ will never say nay; but He will pour out the Spirit proceeding from the Father and Himself, which is the very Spirit of love, infinite love, divine and sublime love, a love which makes heaven where it dwells, and which is able, therefore, to flood the lowliest home with a radiance which can never pass away.



XIII.

THE GOOD WIFE.





## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE GOOD WIFE.

THE woman is a wife in relation to her husband, and at first it looks as though she has only to be good to him and she will be a good wife. But this is not so ; for, like every other person, she is related to many others besides the one to whom she owes special allegiance and affection. Both husband and wife have to do with the surrounding world, and it is mainly upon the way in which they behave to others besides themselves that they find their own relations healthy and happy. It is right and wise to consider our duties in detail, or else we become very theoretical and loose in their discharge. But it is well that every person should consider himself as a part of a great whole, and as owing responsibilities to God and humanity which are larger than any which he owes to any one individual. For lack of this thought many lives become narrow and selfish.

The soul becomes like a tree put into a conservatory, which cannot find enough room to grow to its own proper height. Naturally, there are some things which interest men more than women, just as there are things which interest women and do not so much concern men; but the main current of life is the same for both the sexes. Unless this be borne in mind, we cannot expect to have the expansive spirits and progressive minds which are necessary to the joy of wedded life. At the outset, therefore, it must be remembered that the woman is greater than the wife. We must ask what it is to be a good woman, before we can discover what it is to be a good wife.

To some this question suggests at once all the modern discussion as to woman's rights. But we shall find a settlement of these difficult points by seeing what individuals are fit to do, and by giving them full scope to perform their own work. If we are asked whether women are entitled to be doctors or preachers or guardians of the poor, clearly one way of determining the knotty point is to examine their attainments, to listen to their sermons, and to try how they would guard the poor. If they do these and other things efficiently, we may say that the problem is solved by practice.

It is surely true that if there are any buried powers in woman's nature, it is for the benefit of the community at large that they should be brought to the light of day. For it is only in this way that we can get to see what woman is capable of doing and being. Thus we shall obtain a larger and juster view of womanhood than that which was general in the days which preceded our own.

Apart from a high standard of womanhood, we cannot expect to have a lofty ideal of wifehood. Now, there are qualities which are common both to the man and the woman, and in these we are to find what makes up a character acceptable to God. It is significant that in our Lord we have both the feminine and the masculine qualities fully developed and wondrously balanced. He was the ideal of what our nature ought to be, and we should misunderstand Him much if we did not remember that he partook of all the qualities which go to make up our perfected nature. It was through a partial view of Him that the Roman Catholic began to worship and adore the Virgin Mary. The exclusion from ancient creeds of all the lovingkindness of the Divine Nature is often very marked. Hence the craving was strong to find some compensation in the softer qualities which existed in the mother

of Jesus. But, on the other hand, it has sometimes been thought that the New Testament gave too much prominence to the meek and quiet qualities of human nature. There seemed, it was said, to be no room for the development of what are called the manlier virtues. But on consideration it is seen that both conceptions are erroneous. For our Blessed Lord was a complete combination of all the attributes of a perfect humanity. He was both strong and also gentle. He was at once meek and lowly of heart, and also swift to utter piercing sentences of justice on all unrighteousness. And it was in this complete presentation of what our nature may be that the peculiar value of His Incarnation lies.

Still there are qualities which are peculiar to woman, and they must not be overlooked in any description of all that she may be in the varied relationships of life. All that we suggest is, that she must be regarded as possessing the same essential qualities as the man, and that she is therefore bound to develop side by side with him. Her fall will be his disaster, and her rising will be his enthronement. For good or for evil, their destinies are linked together by a chain which no artificial arrangements of ours can break. Let both, then, pray and work together as belonging to the same

race of beings, and as having before them one common but glorious destiny.

If the man is better for work and for the habits which grow out of work, so is she. If she is nobler when she loves, when she believes, and when she prays, so also is he. Both are in the same boat, and if he has to haul the sails up and down the mast, it is her steady hand and eye that must guide the little vessel through the tossing waves of life. There must be no schism or unnatural division between her interests and his, for they are two parts of one whole. Tennyson is a good teacher on this side of her nature :

“ Either sex alone  
Is half itself, and in true marriage lies  
Nor equal, nor unequal ; each fulfils  
Defect in each, and always thought in thought,  
Purpose in purpose, will in will, they grow,  
The single, pure, and perfect animal,  
The two-cell'd heart beating, with one full stroke,  
Life.”

Or we might quote Robert Browning, to show what one of the greatest minds of our century felt toward the woman to whom he had given his heart's best love. In one of his most exquisite sonnets he tells Mrs. Browning what Dante and Raphael did to show their love, and he thus manages to manifest a chivalry of words which

has rarely, if ever, been surpassed. Raphael the painter tried to write a sonnet, and Dante the poet attempted to paint a portrait of Beatrice.

“What of Rafael’s sonnet, Dante’s picture?

This : no artist lives and loves, that longs not  
Once, and only once, and for one only,  
(Ah, the prize !) to find his love a language  
Fit, and fair, and simple, and sufficient.

Does he paint ? he fain would write a poem ;  
Does he write ? he fain would paint a picture,  
Put to proof art alien to the artist’s,  
Once, and only once, and for one only.  
So to be the man and leave the artist,  
Gain the man’s joy, miss the artist’s sorrow.  
I shall never, in the years remaining,  
Paint you pictures, no, nor carve you statues,  
Make you music that should all express me ;  
So it seems : I stand on my attainment.  
This of verse alone one life allows me ;  
Verse and nothing else have I to give you ;  
Other heights in other lives, God willing :  
All the gifts from all the heights, your own, love !”

There is a special set of qualities in woman which makes her differ from man, and in which resides her special charm and power. We do not admire a masculine woman. We do not like woman to be unsexed. The special power is found in the capacities of love which are developed in her. If these be absent, the possession of other powers is no compensation. The loss is great, and

is seen by all. But when love comes into view, then there is a pre-eminence which all are ready to own. Whatever, then, causes this to grow into more perfect forms is an added spiritual and social energy to woman's nature. In religion we do not care so much to hear woman argue as to creeds and forms of worship, for there we feel we can get plenty of cold light from the theologians of the past and of the present. But when we perceive her loving the Saviour, and pouring out the precious ointment of her affection on the weary feet of some tired pilgrim for her Lord's sake, it is a religion which moves and convinces us all. What is woman's power? Need we pause for a moment in our answer? It is *love*. If we take woman's work, there is something which touches us in its very form; for it is that fine and refined task which the clumsy fingers of man could never undertake. A baby's pair of knitted socks; a table-cover cunningly designed in the interests of refined hospitality; a few flowers arranged with such care that they seem inevitably to suggest "welcome" to our eyes; a sketch of lovely scenery, or a strain of sweetest music;—how well do these and a thousand other things show the feminine soul, and the deeps of love which abide there!



Now, it is a truism that marriage ought to rest on love, and that there can be no true marriage without this element. We ought, therefore, to consider in what ways the nature of woman may be rightly directed and fully enriched as to love before we positively say that she is sure to make a good wife. Should she by some untoward conditions have been starved in her affections, and have lost the power of loving her fellow-creatures, what hope, we may well ask, is there that she would make a good wife?

We do not think that man can be properly developed without love; but in his case he has so many outside interests that the want is not so apparent as in woman. With her the nature is incomplete until she finds an object to pour out her love upon. What is called a "cause" will not suffice. She requires a person, or at least some animate being. Thus a cat or a dog has a place in her heart when she is left very much to herself; and she is a warm advocate of anti-vivisection, because she shrinks back with horror from all suffering inflicted upon poor dumb creatures. When she looks upon a beautiful landscape, it is with more affection in her eyes than a man would possess; and she becomes attached to places as he does not. She throws over everything which

she admires the glamour and sunlight of her affection, and hence inanimate nature is filled with a kind of poetic beauty which only such poets as Wordsworth can interpret. Thus Aurora Leigh is a very different person from her cousin Romney, and when they argue about the ways of Providence, she characteristically appeals to the beauties of nature as a proof that God is good and means the benefit of all His creatures.

If we could understand the genesis and growth of love in the soul of woman, we should comprehend her peculiar power in our world. Whatever tends to the healthy development of the affections will most certainly make her more worthy of her Creator, who made her to love and be loved.

The great danger of fiction is, that it gives to young girls an exaggerated idea of the place and influence of one kind of love. It suits the purpose of the teller of stories to make all his incidents hang upon the climax of the wedding-day. But in actual life we find that love is a far wider thing, and one which, rightly looked at, is quite as romantic. To harp, therefore, as so many readers of novels do, on only one aspect of love, is not only silly, but also positively dangerous. It tends to destroy the faculties of the heart, and to unfit

the woman for the actual performance of the duties of everyday life.

There is more truth in the trite saying than we suppose : a good daughter makes a good wife. She has learned the lesson of love where it ought to be learned — in the school of home-life. A selfish daughter will make a selfish wife. A spoiled daughter will make a spoiled or a sour wife. There are few relationships more beautiful than that of a girl to her mother and father. Some have a very quick eye for the needs of home, and run with very nimble feet to anticipate the wants of those who depend on their sweet ministry. How well do I remember seeing a grown daughter arranging the shawl on the shoulders of her delicate mother, and saying as she gave her a kiss, "Mothers are very sweet things"!

The girl in a home full of brothers and sisters has plenty of scope for the exercise of her affections, and if she seizes her opportunities and makes the most of them, she will be well fitted for the duties of after-life, whatever they may prove to be.

We have dwelt on this necessary preparation for the duties of married life, because in the right cultivation of the heart by means of service for

the good of others will be found the key which unlocks all difficulties. It is not every woman who is fitted for the reception of the best love of a man. She must be prepared by the discipline of life to give as well as to take, or else there will not be the full reciprocity which is necessary to a perfect marriage.

The good wife is one who receives the utmost trust from her husband. If she be met by reticence, a sense of wrong or of inferiority is created, which is detrimental to the peace of home. But the husband knows, if he be of the right kind, that all that is best in himself is being sustained and, in a measure, developed by the excellencies of his wife, and he therefore hastens to repose the greatest trust in her. And it is through this that her quiet judgment becomes so sound and so capable. She has to take many hard and knotty points into consideration, and to con them over quietly, and is thus able to show the way out of many serious difficulties.

This leads us to say that one of the prime duties and privileges of the wife is to have a constant knowledge of her husband's affairs. In olden days, when the place of business was also the place of residence, this seemed more natural than it does now ; but it is no less necessary now

than then. Where the work is of a hard and fatiguing kind, it will be her privilege to see that the home is as much as possible a place of rest. Where it is of a mental character, involving it may be large responsibilities, it will be her pleasure and delight to keep hold of the main threads, so that she may be her husband's best adviser. We do not expect her to enter into particulars, any more than we expect him to enter into domestic cares which in their details must be left to the house-wife.

What is absolutely necessary is, that she should have a general interest in what he does, so that when, as in most cases, she cannot help him in the actual work that has to be done, she may assist him in counsel, and above all in sympathy. There is a story told of a minister who got an influence over a sceptical cobbler, by talking to him about his own trade, and by showing in his talk an extraordinary knowledge on the subject of leather. When surprise was expressed by his companions that he should be seen going to hear the minister preach, his reply was, "Oh, he kens about leather." In the same way does the wife get an increasing influence for good over her husband, when she "kens about leather." It is not ignorance about business-life or meddlesomeness

in it that commends the woman to the man, but a sane and healthy understanding of the methods by which the needful money is brought into the house. And where the profession is one which has to do with the higher interests of mankind, how much may be done by this mutual sympathy ! A doctor's wife need not be a doctor in order to help her husband, as a recent novel seems to teach ("Mona Maclean"). A statesman's wife need not know all the details of political life. A general comprehension of principles, and a loving desire to stand by the hard worker, will be enough to ensure the help which is often so sorely needed.

The leading idea of married life is that of union. It is to be a union of hearts and of purposes. There are cases, doubtless, where each has a separate sphere of duty as far as the outward business of life is concerned. But these exceptions prove the rule. Mr. and Mrs. Browning wrote in separate rooms, but they were both poets, and both rejoiced in one another's work. The enclosing circle should be love, though there is room within the circumference for two individualities to exist. They may admire different books, and be at different degrees of culture, or engage in different branches of industry ; but

there is always the consciousness of a deep oneness of heart and purpose, and there do not grow up differences in friendship. The friends of the one are those of the other. If this cannot be, then the friendship is surrendered. There is nothing which a wife ought to dread more than anything which casts a shadow of separation between herself and her husband. Compromise here is inadmissible.

Some seem to expect that, in the treatment of this delicate subject, we should try to explain how far there is to be obedience on the part of the wife. It might be sufficient to reply that all difficulties are removed by a perfect and constant love. In true marriage the subject of obedience never occurs except in joke. But there are cases of real perplexity, where the judgments of the two are diametrically opposed, and yet some action has to be taken. For immediate decision, as we know, there is nothing so efficient as a committee of one, with the member of it chairman and secretary. It is conceivable, where there are two, that one may say to the other, "You must take the responsibility of deciding." If it affects the education of a son or daughter, or their future welfare in any way, there will be a natural shrinking from taking the sole

responsibility, and both will wait most earnestly on God in prayer in order to find what His leading is. It is not possible to get full light on all the perplexed incidents of life, but prayer will bring us guidance as to the next step. And it is after such spiritual exercises as these that the admonitions of scripture are applicable. It is often overlooked that wives are not told in the Bible to obey their husbands. They are directed so to do in the Prayer-book; but, fortunately, this is not always scriptural in its teaching. And it is not so here. What the New Testament tells wives to do is to be subject to their own husbands in everything, "as the Church is subject to Christ." This is a very different doctrine from that of utter obedience. Nowhere is there the absolute right of commanding unlimited obedience on the part of one creature in relation to another. In the State we are to resist unjust policies, and to get bad laws altered, and, in extreme instances, to disobey the laws of man so that we may obey those of God. So, too, it is in the domestic circle. Let both seek divine guidance, and then when one has to decide, we shall find that the wife is only too ready to hand over the responsibility to the husband whom she loves, and by whose side she has been praying for divine direction. While



we see that excellence is to be obtained in this, as in all spheres, by the continuance of love and the exercise of prayer, we must not overlook the necessary practical details of duty which can alone render the gifts of God's Spirit effectual. Love, like all qualities of the soul, needs to be fed by activities, or else it will die out of the character. Love grows by means of service freely and affectionately rendered. Whatever new phases of woman's duties may emerge in modern life, it will still be true of the wife that her first duty will be to the husband of her choice; and no amount of public spirit, or of religious activity, or of maternal love, will be sufficient to lead her away from those thousand and one acts of kindness by which she first won the chief place in her husband's affections, and by which she has hitherto not only held, but also increased her hold of, his heart.

It is on this principle that marriages are truly made in heaven. And they are in a spiritual sense re-made there. The union of hearts receiving the sanction and blessed by the grace of Christ, will not be sundered by the hand of death. For a time the cloud comes down, but soon the shadow passes, and in perpetual sunshine, and in a home never once darkened by sorrow and

separation, the twain find themselves in a fellowship of full felicity and of perfect harmony. And many a man, as he steps on that happy shore after the storms of life are for ever over, will feel that, if it had not been for the steadfast courage and unfailing faith of his wife, he would, perhaps, have never reached the haven of full and final joy. She has been the sacrament through which God has poured His choicest gifts on his character and life, and in eternity he will have reason to thank God for bestowing upon him the best and choicest blessing that a man could ever have—a good wife. In verity, she has been “from the Lord.”

The man knows what a good wife is by seeing the beauty of a mother's character. That character is hit off in the following lines—

“ . . . One  
Not learned, save in gracious household ways  
Not perfect, nay, but full of tender wants ;  
No angel, but a dearer being, all dipt  
In angel instincts, breathing paradise.  
Interpreter between the gods and men,  
Who looked all native to her place, and yet  
On tiptoe seem'd to tread upon a sphere  
Too gross to read, and all male minds perforce  
Swayed to her from their orbit as they moved,  
And girdled her with music. Happy he  
With such a mother ! Faith in womankind

Beats with his blood, and trust in all things high  
Comes easy to him ; and though he trip and fall,  
He shall not blind his soul with clay."

It is through such pictures as these, drawn, as we know, from actual life, that the man is led to try and make himself worthy of the woman. But no less must the woman seek to render herself worthy of the man. If he is to be something more than a feeble fop, she is to be more than a dressed doll. Education, reading, an intelligent understanding of the questions of the day, should prepare her to be a true comrade to the man when he is an intelligent being. And both are to seek their life in God ; both are to be subject to Christ. It is through His love that they are to learn the meaning of all the heights of self-denying affection, and it is through His law that they are to know how to order their united lives, so that they shall be well pleasing in the sight of Him who has granted them the loan of a little time that they may be prepared for a long eternity. Many have a beautiful wedded life, but it is only beautiful as is the starlight. They might have a joy as bright as the sun if only they would let the voice of Christ be heard in their hearts, and if they would but bend themselves in loving service to His

commands. And where both will not go that way of the Lord, let the woman go alone. Not neglecting the ties of home, nor leaving the bright fireside when the man wants to rest at eventide from his labours, but still showing that the Saviour is Lord of her spiritual affections, and that His will is supreme. It was thus that many Christian women in early times who had heathen husbands won them over to Christianity ; they did it by their method of life. Let the woman linger last at the cross, sharing the Lord's agonies ; and first at the open tomb, trumpeting forth the triumph which He has achieved over death and sin. Let her walk before us as in a dream of purity, and yet stooping to the lowliest services for her dear Lord's sake, and, by influences stronger than we know, she would lead a whole world to the feet of Christ. For every pearl which she picks from the mire of human sin would be used by her for the glorious diadem with which she will at last crown Jesus Lord of all.



XIV.

THE GOOD BROTHER AND  
SISTER.



## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE GOOD BROTHER AND SISTER.

THE loves of earth are like the fruits: each has its own peculiar flavour. There are few things in our social relations more beautiful than the affection of brothers and sisters. When we want to sum up the attributes of the Saviour's soul, we have few better designations for His character than that of the "Elder Brother." He is the Brother of all those who put their trust in Him.

In this, as in so much else, He is the Model which we are to copy. He was a Man with masculine virtues in His nature, but still there was a pure tenderness which made woman know that she would be saved in His company. And, on the other hand, men never mistook His pity for softness; they knew that there was a strength about Him which made Him a fit Comrade for them in all that was worthy of their manhood.



There are no particulars of His home-life given, as in most human biographies, which would enable us to see how he carried out the detailed duties of a brother ; but there are in Him all the graces and all the strong and tender virtues which endure the stress and temptations of the life of an earthly home. In this matter, as in all others, He gives us an example that we should follow in His footsteps.

As a general rule, Providence seems to mean that the brothers and sisters shall after a certain time separate. The brothers go out into the world ; they get married ; and the sisters are either left to succour the old folks, or they have husbands and children, and so grow up the interesting positions of aunts and uncles. But at the beginning of the days, just when character is most plastic, these brothers and sisters live together. There is, as we know, a vast distinction in soul between the two sexes. Each has qualities which the other does not possess ; and with all our advances in the education of woman—advances which, I trust, have our fullest sympathy—we may be sure that these differences will go on till the end of time. They form not only a part of the education of life, but also an essential element in its happiness. Much of the joy of social intercourse depends on the free

interchange of thought and feeling between the sexes. It seems, therefore, an all-wise arrangement that we should early in life see the influence of fathers on their daughters, of mothers on their sons; and also the mutual influence of brothers and sisters on one another. It is through the mother and sister that the boy gets his first glimpse into the nature of womanhood. So it is through the father and the brother that the girls get to know what men are like.

Often a girl's life gets soured throughout by having an unsatisfactory father or an unworthy brother. She persuades herself that all the rest of mankind are pretty much alike, and she is, in the literal sense of the word, a misanthrope. This is the bitterness which runs through some novels at the present time, but whose fashion will pass away as women are led to have a greater faith in men. So, too, men who have silly sisters, or vain and foolish mothers, carry about a spice of cynical contempt with them in all their dealings with women. They talk to them as though they were inferiors, with whom it is good to spend a pleasant half-hour, but to whom they would never come for the serious solution of any of life's greater problems. Both are wrong—the women who disbelieve in men, and the men who despise and pity women.

There are enough of the good on both sides to rebuke these exaggerations which tend to divide the human race into two parts. God has made them counterparts of and complements to one another, and it is only a jaundiced view of society which can make us believe otherwise.

Clearly the great thing which we need is ever to be raising the standard both of manhood and of womanhood. And it is given to brothers and sisters to do this by the way in which they live together in the early stages of their home existence. It is in this as in so much else of social duty, everything seems to depend on the kind of character which we develop. There is a kind of tact which teaches us how to behave to one another, if we are really saintly ; but if the essence of Christianity is absent, then no rules are of any avail. Still, it helps us to see whether we have the root of the matter in us when we are reminded what kind of conduct is expected from us, especially in the privacy of home ministries.

*We expect from a maiden, purity or modesty.* Unless this is taught by a sister at home, it will not be easily learned elsewhere. And though it would be cowardly of the young man to trace his coarseness of taste or conduct back to his sister, yet we cannot hide the immense influence which

she exerts in this direction. She has an atmosphere about her which rebukes without words the ribald jest, and which will not allow the rudeness of literature or of conversation to approach her. This reserve of silence may, for great ends of public purification, be broken by older women, but for the younger ones an armour of silence is best, though this need not necessarily be one of total ignorance.

*It is easier for a young woman to be religious than for a young man.* Both her nature and her circumstances make it, apparently, more spontaneous in her case. She is shielded more constantly from the rough touch of the world; she has more capacity of love within her soul; and hence the emotional side of Christianity appeals to her more strongly. But on this very account she must be careful as to the *type* of the religious life which she cultivates. Her danger, when she becomes religious, is at once to set to work to put the world right, including that of brothers. She may fasten on some extraneous habits, and imagine that if she could but change these she would have succeeded in changing the heart. But to banish smoking and to drive away sin are two very different things. Women must not suppose that olfactory sensitiveness is a mark of a righteous

soul. Smoking may be carried on most selfishly and offensively, and when youths have neither time, money, nor health to spare, it may amount to a positive sin, which every wise parent would forbid, so long as sons are under tutelage. But sisters should be slow to adopt an ascetic form of religion if they wish to be followers of Christ rather than of John the Baptist, and if they wish to win over their brothers to what is good.

*The sister may become the very life of the home.* She very often has this in her power, but it is an influence which must be quietly exerted. Why does she learn music? So that she may be the centre of joy to all that are in the house. She has deft fingers, an instinct for tidiness, and a love of the beautiful which may be pressed into the service of the household from her very early years.

There is no doubt that many things are done by us because we hope to benefit others, and if this consideration did not influence us, we should leave them undone. Thus a girl will take care of her personal appearance when there is a brother or some one dearer and nearer to please; she might be somewhat neglectful if she did not want to give pleasure to others. So it may be with the appointments of the house, and with those moral habits which render family life

cheerful and inspiring. It is very widely felt that all accomplishments and talents are meant to give pleasure to others as well as to ourselves ; and who has a greater right to a sister's influence than the brother who is compelled, for a few years at least, to live under the same roof? When so treated, the young man is not likely to choose a silly wife. He has already seen and felt what a social power a woman can be, and he is generally too wise to commit his future into the hands of one who will not, at least, be as good as his own sister.

*Brothers should be chivalrous to their sisters.* It is said that there is a distinct difference in homes as to this point. In one set the brothers are taught to wait on the sisters, and in the other the contrary rule prevails. It is perhaps best where the serving is so spontaneously done on both sides that it is not noticed whether the brothers or the sisters do most of it. But those who have been away from the home all day are apt to be a little exacting in their expectations. They do not always reflect that the time of their absence has been spent by the keepers of the home in work quite as hard as their own. There has, therefore, to be a little give and take in this matter ; but more especially should the brothers learn the lesson of courtesy at home and practise

it there. Many seem to think that their attentions should be first shown to some sister's friend ; but no ! it should be shown to the sister herself. Little gifts to the sister are wonderfully appreciated. They are strangely treasured in after-years, and it would bring tears to many a man's eyes to find how much has been thought of something he did or gave years and years ago.

"A ministering angel shall my sister be." \*

Such is the natural exclamation of the man. But why should not the woman or girl use this language toward the brother ? The ministering angel is of no sex. The angel is the one who will fetch and carry ; the one who will bring cheer and hope. Let the boy or man wake to a sense of his duties and privileges. It is in this reciprocal service that mutual love thrives most. It is through this that a respect which is the foundation of lasting affection is created. Thus these grow up with an ever-increasing store of sweet memories over which time and sorrow have only the power of adding to joy and love. Through such mutual service there have grown up some of the most loving and lovely fellowships which the world has ever witnessed. While the ideal

\* *Hamlet*, Act v. sc. i.

relationship is that of husband and wife, yet there is a bloom and a fragrance about that of which we speak which finds no parallel. Nor need the fact that new relationships are entered into mar the old home feeling. So long as both shall live they are watchful over one another's welfare, the brother always ready with a man's help, and the sister equally prepared with a woman's sympathy.

*Some brothers and sisters are not very nice.* This must be confessed, if we are to take an honest view of our subject. We know how very troublesome a boy can be to his sisters, and we have seen that in after-life differences sometimes only seem to grow larger. Indeed, it is sad to observe how many there are who, when once the inevitable separation comes, no longer hold intercourse one with another, and meet, perhaps after the lapse of years, for the first time at the funeral of a parent or of some other near relative. These differences sometimes emerge when property is in question. Money is a great divider. But if it has this power, it is only those who were not properly cemented together by love before it came upon the scene.

It is evident that we did not have the choice of our brothers and sisters. It would have been



rather a queer world if such a choice had been granted to us. What strange assortments there would have been! And what innumerable mistakes would have been made! At first like would have gone to like, till we found that this made but a dull world.

The absence of our power to choose is meant to minister to our real happiness, as well as to our discipline. We are thrown together, with different dispositions and at different ages, so that out of our divergences a better product of character may be evolved. A seventeenth-century proverb says that "blood is thicker than water." But this it could never be had it not have been for the fate or Providence which ordained, apart from our will, what brothers and sisters we should have. They have been given to us to call forth the disinterestedness of our natures, for there are many things which we should do willingly for those nearest to us which we could not do for any others. Thus their existence calls forth powers of sacrifice which otherwise would have lain dormant in our hearts. On the lowest ground, we may safely say that these different dispositions which we did not create make life interesting, and they certainly need be no cause of jarring. The clever one of the family takes with him in his

rise those affections which are always greater than any intellectual or social possessions. And even in that harder case by far, where one of the number has gone astray, how tender is the heart of every member of the family if only it is filled with the true compassion which has been taught by Christ !

“Then gently scan your brother man,  
Still gentlier sister woman ;  
Though they may gang a kennin’ wrang,  
To step aside is human.”

*Brothers and sisters should take an interest in one another's pursuits.* This is only a particular way of stating the general truth that they should love one another ; for it is this mutual affection which solves all difficulties and makes life run smoothly. Some think that the pursuits should be the same. If the young men shoot and fish, so should the young women ; and there will then grow up a class of young women who ape the manners and dress of their brothers. This is as offensive to good taste as it is contrary to nature. Yet there are many objects which they have in common. These should be pursued with mutual sympathy. Pastimes are often such that they can be shared together ; and even when this is not the case, the winter evenings are best spent in one

another's company, sitting in the same room, with the same table large enough for all. It is in the friction of home pleasures that the character best of all gains its sweetness and its strength. A home which has no variety of interests is rather apt to be dull and uninteresting. Yet a common purpose may run through all these varied plans; and thus, as in all nature besides, there will be unity in diversity.

There are pleasures outside the home which should be shared in common. It is often a safe rule for the man to go only to those scenes where he could safely and pleasantly be accompanied by his own sister. Let him get into the habit of taking his sister out to some of the harmless amusements of the place where they live, let him pay the expense, and he will find his heart expand with the purest joy. A big brother is apt to get pampered and spoiled by his sisters, and he can easily avoid this dangerous process by giving himself to be the servant of those at home.

Only the sisters may well remember that they too owe some service to their brothers. They are guardians of the peace and happiness of the home. Nothing, therefore, that will minister to its cleanliness and order is to be beneath their notice and co-operation. Cooking, cleaning, darning,

mending, dusting, polishing,—these are arts which are indeed despised in some superfine circles ; but much of the real happiness of the civilized world depends on these homely habits. Young men of depraved tastes get to love the public billiard-room,\* and other haunts, better than the common sitting-room at home ; and we have no defence to make for them. But still mothers and sisters might often ask themselves how far they have used the tremendous advantages of the home as a counter-attraction to such places as these.

But it is not in mere external matters that sisters should share with their brothers the same projects. These are times of advancing education, and it is well proved that woman and man are intellectually on a similar level. They may not and do not dwell in the same parts of this tableland of knowledge, for it is a wide space ; but the level is the same. They should, therefore, talk to one another about their mutual interests. The books are not always the same, but the contents are worth talking about. The newspaper is not interesting in the same degree to both, but each should hear the views of the other as to

\* I do not wish to be misunderstood. Billiards are a fine game. They can be played under safe and wholesome conditions.

things national, international, and even as to things parochial. Our conversation needs to be redeemed from inanity ; it requires to be seasoned with the salt of something useful ; and the only way to get the perilous stuff of silliness out of our talk is to put wise and useful subjects into our thoughts. Life would mean a larger and finer power were we all intent on something else than the mere gossip of the passing day. Let the family reckon up some evening what its talk has been worth, and how much ashamed we should be at its emptiness ! Yet we cannot well prevent this if the mind be void of knowledge, and the life of wider interests than its own.

Yes ! wider interests than its own. For we are not unmindful that there are in all our large cities thousands of houses where home-life is an impossibility. But cities have this great advantage, that every young man and woman who cares for a higher life has the opportunity of cultivating it at very small cost. The free libraries are a modern institution, but are a very important part of that system of barricades which we are erecting against the inroads of folly and vice. We need the same kind of communistic aids in our villages. They too are awakening to a new and nobler form of existence. But in both city and village the

comfortable classes must come to the aid of those less fortunate. In the working of clubs for girls, boys, young men, and young women, brothers and sisters have full scope for their united energies. The mental gifts, tastes, and accomplishments which they possess they should freely place at the disposal of the community at large. This is a form of socialism at which no one could cavil, and in its issues it would tend more largely than we dream to heal the differences which mere artificial arrangements have created between class and class. For in the midst of such exercises there is as much to learn as to teach. We hardly fathom the depths of love which exist in all parts of this complicated community of which we form a part. It sometimes comes to us as a surprise to find how tenderly and passionately the poor love their neighbours, and what sacrifices they make for one another's benefit. Yet it should be no surprise, and would not be, if only we were more familiar with their ways and habits. We see ragged "Joe" and his little sister "Mary" holding one another's hands in the cold street, and it comes across us that after all they are of the same flesh and blood as our own dear ones. It is that well-spring of love in every human heart that makes life wherever we find it so full of

beauty and of teaching to us. Ragged Joe hunts the thoroughfares for food for his sister! What greater love could a prince show? Is not the lad a prince in disguise when he shows such unselfish love as this? We talk of going "down" to the poor, but in real truth it is often a going up to the top of the mountains of moral life. And for this reason brothers and sisters could do few better things than devote some of their leisure time in climbing up hand in hand to gather these lovely specimens of human affection, which grow on the high bleak altitudes of poverty.

We enter the artistic drawing-room, with its semitones of colour, and on the couch there reclines Angelina devouring the last but not the best novel. She has thin shoes on her feet; a lovely but light dress hangs in plaited folds from her shoulders. She is not without sensibilities, for at the present moment a tear is in her dark and lustrous eye; the hero of the story is in some trouble which has touched her heart. Do not even critics weep at stories when they are well told? But we venture to tell Angelina that there are real tragedies at her very door which need her instant attention. She will have, it is true, to put on thick and almost clumsy boots, she will have to wear a common stuff dress, she will have to

defend herself against the rain and cold ; but still we bid her come and see her sisters, in order to help them to a better joy and to brighter days. If she obeys, from that moment she ceases to be a languishing girl whose every movement has to be watched with the tenderest care, and she begins to be the noblest creation of God—a Christian woman.

The young man has his fads and fancies. He too has his pleasant haunts and his chosen comrades. After a hard day's work in the town, he is entitled, so he thinks, to spend his leisure as he lists. Let us call him Adonis. For such in every movement of his carefully kept body he seems to be. Adonis lounges. There is no vice in him. He is empty of anything which would give dignity to his purposes. He can dance well ; can skate in the winter-time ; can criticize a drama or a novel intelligently ; and he can play the polished gentleman as well as any, while he is particularly attentive to ladies young and old. But as yet Adonis has not been touched with a sense of the grave responsibility of life. He is laughed at by serious persons, for they think that he is trying to make game of everything, and in the attempt they suppose that he becomes ridiculous. Yet we should no more despair of Adonis



than we should of the fallen man or woman whom Christ has taught us both to pity and to love. The cry of a human brother may enter his soul beneath all those superficialities wherewith he has hitherto concealed his real self. And should he obey that call and give himself to some form of battle against the cruel wrong and misery of human society, he would be at once transformed. He would no longer be a great overgrown boy, with nothing to do but to amuse himself at the expense of others, but he would begin to be what God intended—a real Christian man, with stuff in him.

We prefer to close with a different picture. It is that of a brother and sister devoted to good works. To what better end could life be devoted than to good works? Some seem to think that there is a kind of narrowness in good works. But it is in reality the only life which has real breadth in it. With what other method of living will you compare it? Shall we visit one of our watering-places, where there are some strong and healthy people who are enjoying repose before they have earned it? We cannot suppose that a life like this is desirable. It leads to all kinds of spiritual dyspepsia, and such places become the homes of all the fads of all the faddists. Or will you dream

that life in its fulness is to be obtained beneath pure Italian skies, or on the margin of the lovely lakes of Switzerland? Nothing could be more refreshing as an interlude in the midst of this wild and tumultuous struggle of ours. But to settle down in such scenes for a series of years is simply to waste the only precious thing which God has given us, viz. our life. Unless, indeed, health obliges, or our task is taken with us. But we return to our contention, that the strength spent in good works is well bestowed. And the picture is that of brother and sister with the years increasing upon them, who love one another more intensely because they have found service and joy in the family of the Heavenly Father. Their days are spent in praise, and their hearts can never be sundered, though times and seas and the floods of death roll between them. Nature's ties have been spiritualized in this brother's heart, in this sister's soul, and they find an imperishable unity in the benediction of God.



XV.

THE GOOD STEWARD.



## CHAPTER XV.

### THE GOOD STEWARD. .

THIS chapter is about money, but let not those who have none turn away from it. Many elude the teaching of Holy Scripture on this subject, because they think that it is directed exclusively to the rich. But the Scriptures do not anywhere define what riches are; and it is certain that most of its warnings are as applicable to those who desire to become wealthy as to those who are possessors of wealth. Let the reader ask himself whether he does not desire a little more of this world's goods—and there are few who do not—and he will see at once, however poor he may be, that the doctrine of stewardship is as wholesome for him as for another. In the time of our Lord the rent of a small village house was from seven to twenty-eight shillings, and of a larger one about nine pounds, a year. It was possible therefore, to have what in these days

would be considered a very small income and yet to be considered rich. Indeed, the word "rich" is a relative term, and refers mainly to what a man has left after he has paid for the first necessities of life. God means us to keep body and soul together; and if we have children, to see after their careful culture, nourishment, and education. The goodness of a steward is seen in the way in which he makes his money. Before we can give or spend, we have in some way to get; and it is here that money is often a great touchstone of character. What is wealth? Professor Marshall says that it "consists of things that satisfy wants, directly or indirectly." When we are producing wealth, we are satisfying wants; and our wealth consists for the most part of goods, which have a money value. It is true that we may choose a line of life where this will not be the chief aim in view, but even then we must have our wants satisfied; and as this can only be done by our labour, the way in which we exert our energies becomes the most important consideration in the conduct of practical life. We cannot say that missionaries, ministers of religion, teachers, and doctors are altogether removed from the money measure of their labours; for the community would soon withdraw their support from them

if they felt that their energies were not being rightly used. And certainly with regard to the general trade of the world, we feel that there is great justice in the money value which is placed on human labour.

Some seem to think that money getting and religion are incompatible. But, on the contrary, there can in most cases be no practical religion without money-getting, or its equivalent.

In nothing do we need to rid our minds more of cant than on this subject. Money is simply the term we employ to define the wants which we feel, and which must be met if we are to continue to live. How that money is got is therefore a very important point, and the method runs at once both into the world of morals and into that of religion. It affects, in other words, our relations to our fellow-men and our relations to God.

Money should be the return for honest toil. No toil, no money. This seems to be a law of the life which we have to lead. For children and for old or infirm people other laws obtain, for some are preparing to be workers, and others have done their day's task. But for the due use and development of manhood and womanhood the rule seems to be universal. Idlers and gamblers seek a subterfuge from it, but sooner or later they



have to meet the punishment of their sin against society and against their Maker.

Within the limitations of his own higher possibilities and of justice to his fellows, it is every man's duty to make as much money as he can. This may seem a startling doctrine, especially to those who think that the whole drift of the Bible is against money-making altogether. It is simply another way of saying that a man should do his best work every day.

Think, however, of the limitations, and the truth will seem very reasonable. He must not suppose that he can, with impunity, turn himself into a mere money-making machine. That would be to forget the infinite possibilities of his nature; and it is the thought of these that makes us protest so strongly against the inordinate length of the hours which so many have to spend in mechanical toil. They have no time left for the cultivation of the home virtues, to say nothing of the mental and religious life. They live the life of dogs, and we need not be surprised that they sometimes manifest the coarseness of the lower animals. What else can we expect when we consider the dreary round of servitude to which they are condemned? But in their case we excuse the poor fellows, because we say that only in this way can

they at present find food for themselves and those dependent upon them. But what are we to say about those who have a choice, and yet who expend all their vital powers on 'Change, or in the warehouse, or in the shop, because they want at the end of the year to show a larger balance to their credit?

These are sacrificing the higher powers of their natures to the lower, and they are not worthy of the trust which their Creator has reposed in them. Better to earn less and to be better in themselves! Better to be a Milton receiving £15 for "Paradise Lost," than some novel-writers whose figure runs into many hundreds!

There is also a prejudice in some minds against saving money, as though there were something almost irreligious in the habit, whereas the irreligion consists in not making provision for the future. Thrift, as Sir John Lubbock points out in the "Use of Life," is derived from the verb to thrive. We cannot thrive without saving. Our nation is said to be backward in this virtue; and if so, it is perhaps partly because the teachers of religion have omitted this from their exhortations. It is, indeed, one of those social virtues which we may expect social reformers to dwell upon more than Christian preachers; but none

the less does it form a part of that wonderful economy of life which we have to work out while we are passing through this world.

One of the most important rules for earthly happiness is the simplest, viz. always to live below the income. Larger savings would make our working population a part of the providers of the means of production in our country, and would do something to bridge over the chasm between labour and capital. If it would not accomplish this on a large scale, yet in individual cases it would do a great deal to minister to home comfort, and to provide against those contingencies to which all are liable through sickness and old age.

It is in the spending of money that many of our difficulties are most keenly felt. And those difficulties are ever with us, for we are always in the act of supplying our wants, and this is mainly done through the expenditure of hard cash. A thousand obstacles start up before us when we think of this subject, as to the proportion which should be spent on luxuries, as to what are luxuries and what are necessities, and thus the controversy with ourselves goes on endlessly. And it is well that it should be so, for it is thus that money becomes one of the most important

elements in our moral and spiritual education. As the young man buys his first cigar, he has a qualm of conscience as to whether it is a wise expenditure; and it is to be hoped that he will continue the process of questioning right on through all his life, especially where that outlay is on himself. A new bonnet is a cause of unseen but endless discussion in a woman's heart; and as she compares notes with her intimates, she learns with surprise at what a much less cost others as well clothed as she walk through life with credit.

It is fortunate that there are no royal roads to the settlement of these knotty questions, for if there were we should lose one of the most valuable parts of our discipline, not to say one of the most interesting subjects of discussion.

One thing we need to learn: never to judge our neighbour, unless we know all about his income and all about the claims which are made upon him. Nor is it a Christian or a healthy thing to be wishing that all should be reduced to the same level of expenditure. This is indeed the cure which many social teachers are advocating for the cruel miseries and inequalities which exist among us to-day. There is indeed so much extravagance, so much positive vice, and so much wastefulness

connected with great wealth, that we are not surprised that a levelling down of all incomes is the panacea which strikes a superficial observer as the one thing needed. The picture is that of an Arcadian row of neat cottages with sanded floors, where all would shuffle through life at about £2 a week. We are not deriding this fond dream, for we have too much sympathy with the efforts of the reformer to make his plans more difficult than they are inherently. But apart from the impracticability of these schemes, we say that what is needed is a levelling up, not a mere pulling down. Probably both processes are necessary, and there are not wanting signs to show that they are in the course of being carried out; so that the rich will not be so rich as they were before, but that they will be forced to pay more for the well-being of the country, where their money has been made or inherited.

But what we need more than this process is one of raising the type and scale of life among the people generally. It is a long road. The income must be made before the money is spent. Whether a man can and ought to buy a picture, a horse, a fine piece of furniture, or to launch out into a park with a splendid mansion full of art treasures, depends, among other things, on his income. So

in a lesser way it is with all of us. Our expenditure should bear the stamp of our mental and moral, as well as of our material, life on it. It is not creditable to us as Englishmen that we spend so much on cricket and football, while we spend comparatively little on books. Apart from moral considerations, it does not reflect glory on our character that we can afford £140,000,000 every year on beer, wines, and spirits, and that there are comparatively so few millions spent on beautiful pictures. What is a good book?—a Milton, a Shakespeare, a Wordsworth, a Carlyle, a Tennyson, a Browning? It is a companion for all our days, a friend who is always at his best, a talker who refreshes us without weariness, a thinker who leaves off thinking when we can no longer follow his philosophy, a summer day when the snow is thickest and the storm outside is most biting.

A Manchester merchant told me that he had for many years kept a ledger account with his God. Before he did this he imagined that he gave much more than he actually did to religious work. The result of his ledger account was not only that he gave more, but that he gave cheerfully in response to the calls made upon him. His giving was no longer a tax levied, but an offering which was already ready. Many persons think that this rule

would not apply except in the case of a "merchant." But the principle is the same for all. The firstfruits have to be rendered to God, not the lastfruits. We have not to ask how much we require for conveniences and comforts, but rather to reduce our income by the sum which we honestly think we ought to give away, and then proceed to apportion our expenditure. But the very opposite is the usual way of acting, and that, too, in a Christian land. What elementary lessons, then, we still need to learn before we can consider ourselves worthy of the name of scholars in Christ's school! Many Christian young men spend ten pounds in a bicycle or a pound in smoking who have never given two and sixpence to a missionary society. It is said that five millions are spent annually to watch football matches; and yet we are struggling in all our foreign and home missionary societies to keep up an income of three millions, and to overtake the new needs which are pressing upon us. But we still call ourselves Christian!

There is something wrong somewhere; and though we gratefully acknowledge the large and increasing sums which are provided by a generous public, yet it is evident that there is still great need of teaching on this important matter of

storing and scattering for good works. Of teaching? Yes, and of learning still more; for it is only by practice that men can know what a deep well-spring of joy may be opened in the heart when we once enroll ourselves among the ranks of generous and conscientious givers. And this enrolling is altogether independent of our worldly position; for the most bountiful giver, according to the unerring testimony of our Lord, was the widow who gave only her two mites. Here the millionaire and the day-labourer are on an equality so long as each has the spirit of love, and gives in proportion to opportunity. Let not, then, any reader turn away from this special page; nor let any one who reads, beguile the time of perusal by imagining how suitable the instruction is for some rich but miserly neighbour. There is no distinction of persons with the Almighty, and if we begin to make them, we are defeating the purpose which He has in view when He graciously sends a message to us about our talent and the way in which it is to be employed. The cap of charity is elastic, and fits most of us.

It sometimes seems as though the Christian character were built in water-tight compartments; the whole vessel is afloat, while some parts of it are submerged and endanger its safety. And thus



it is necessary to enter a kind of dry dock for repairs. It is so with this grace of Christian giving. Paul recognized this necessity when he said to the Corinthians, "But as ye abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all earnestness, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also" (2 Cor. viii. 7). By "this grace" he meant that of liberality. Living at a great commercial centre, where the opportunities of making money were very frequent, they were tempted to neglect the duty of giving. There must have been some covetousness in their natures, or he would not have refused to live on their free-will offerings. He choose in their case to support himself by the labour of his own hands, lest by any means he should spoil their character by raising unworthy suspicions of his motives in preaching the truth among them. It was not to a generous Church like that of Philippi that he spoke emphatically about the responsibilities of wealth, but to this one, which we may presume was rather given to a sordid view of life. They were in danger of falling away from Christ through the sin of covetousness.

If they did not abound in this grace, what would be the consequences? They would have more money to spend on themselves, their houses,

their ships, their luxuries, their children, and more money to leave to their executors to distribute. But they themselves would be impoverished. Their natures would be poorer. And if they allowed the sin of covetousness to grow and master them, they would be excluded from the kingdom of heaven. On this point there is no halting or hesitation in the words of Scripture. It is not that God wants our money, but our money is a way of giving ourselves. And unless the *self* is surrendered, conversion and consecration may have been genuine, but their work has been undone. The world has smothered the flame of the spiritual life, and the man, of the earth earthy, sinks in the scale of being and is lost. To recover us from such sins as these, the Scripture has condescended to speak on the subject of giving. For it is the only cure of covetousness. There is no other. Poverty is no cure, nor bad trade, nor hoarding up money for our children to spend or give, nor paying taxes. But giving is a noble and effective remedy. Great joy blesses the Christian giver. Let me briefly put some points which will show how this virtue of giving should be cultivated and exercised.

I. IT SHOULD BE CULTIVATED ADDITIONALLY.

It should be added to the other virtues, in order

to make them effective. Just as (to use a familiar illustration) a boy values advice from his father when it is accompanied by half a crown, so all our professions and practices get a kind of new glory and power if we always add to them this grace of giving. It need not be the gift of money. Often it should not be this, and often it cannot be. But it is frequently the best aid to the power of a religious life. Faith proves itself by its works. Speech is made savoury by the life. Knowledge is received by those around when it flows from a sympathetic heart. Earnestness and zeal are made excellent when they build up some broken wall of Zion. And love, to the Apostle Paul, would best show itself by care for those poor Christians of whom he so often thought.

A generous nature gives a kind of electric thrill to all that is said and done. Bishop Fraser was loved through Lancashire, not merely or chiefly for his opinions and utterances, for they were sometimes at variance with the convictions of those who admired him, but because he was such a rich giver. He was always spending his time, energy, and money for the good of the diocese of which he was such a splendid overseer. When the Church of Christ is filled with such souls, all its other graces gain a tenfold splendour.

## II. THIS VIRTUE NEEDS TO BE CULTIVATED *EARLY.*

Trees are often stunted because they were not rightly looked after when they were saplings. It is particularly so with this grace of giving. Young people do not earn money, and therefore they sometimes do not give money. In order that they may not lose this precious privilege, they should be almoners for their parents. Some gifts might be bestowed in their own name and by their own hands, when they actually come out of the pockets of parents and guardians. And often little coins could be drawn out of their own slender allowance, so that they may be made to feel that they too were expected to be givers as well as receivers. And this becomes especially important when young men and women begin themselves to earn money. To spend all that they earn on themselves is one of the surest ways of forcing apace the weeds of selfishness in the garden of the soul.

Unless some such means are taken, we find the happiness of benevolence absent from the character. Those who remain with only just sufficient means at their disposal think their pence unimportant, and deny themselves one of the greatest joys in life, and also one of the greatest means of usefulness.

For the pence of the poor often make up a larger aggregate than the contributions of the rich. And should these young people become possessed of large means, they do not contribute their fair share to the community where their wealth has been made. Sad cases are sometimes seen where the habit of making money has not been counter-acted by that of giving, and the man has had to confess that he could not part with his luxuries—could not even part with the hoarded wealth which could bring him no good. And these instances have occurred mainly, perhaps, because the Christian Church did not train souls in youth to the exercise of a quick and ready generosity. It is here that mothers can do so much to quicken the grace of giving in the young. Woman has a generous nature, and she is often our best teacher in this matter, especially where she will allow herself to take large views of money and of its highest uses.

### III. IT NEEDS TO BE CULTIVATED *UNIVERSALLY*.

Some seem to think that this duty belongs alone to the rich, and any address upon it passes over them. They are not thinking of themselves, but of their neighbours. How well, they think, these health-giving truths suit some one better off than they! The widow's two mites

are needed and accepted by God as much as the wealthy contribution. Generosity is a moral virtue. It cannot be weighed in material scales. We can never tell how generous a giver is until we know both his motives and his circumstances. We can judge ourselves. We can urge ourselves to duty. We can examine ourselves. And as every man is a receiver from God, every man can in some little way be a giver. The grace is diffused through all ranks. Misers and the generous are to be found in all classes.

#### IV. IT NEEDS TO BE EXERCISED *SOCIALLY*.

Giving, in the Christian Church, is a form of socialism. And it is the best form, because it is founded on the voluntary principle. The Church at Jerusalem tried socialism, but it was not forced on any member. People might still be Christians and members without doing what Barnabas did, in parting with *all* his property. Ananias and Sapphira might have retained membership even though they had given nothing to the common fund. But they would have had little or no joy in the Christian life. And this joy, which was so characteristic of the early Church, sprang, in a large measure, from the spirit of benevolence which pervaded their society. *Tax, rent, or payment* were words which they

did not understand in those days. It was all free and generous gift. And it was gift on the part of the well-to-do for the poor. It was the aggregation and collection of the larger and smaller gifts into one common fund. The gifts were different according to the means and willingness of the givers—and this was the intention. The large gifts did not boast over the small; nor did the small hang their heads with shame by the side of the large. The sunflower and the modest primrose may both rejoice in the same sunlight, and thrive side by side in the same garden.

What is true of one member as distinguished from another is true also of Churches. These may come into a fraternity. These may remember one another's wants. The mother may help the daughter, and the city may send its resources to the village. The underlying principle is the same; it is the principle of Christian socialism. The strong help the weak. The old stoop down to the young. The few live for the many. The gold, the silver, and the copper lie peacefully side by side, kept warm by the bank-notes; and all of them are freed from envy and pride, because all are dedicated to the one holy family, and all are signs and symbols of one happy brotherhood.

V. IT NEEDS TO BE CULTIVATED *PERIODICALLY*.

God not only gives continuously, but He does so in periods. He gives us the rain, and also the latter rain. In grace He gives us blessing at morning and evening prayer, and at the breaking of bread; and He grants us one day in seven for the purposes of rest and worship. This periodicity is characteristic of God's dealings with us. Though there is no pause in the tide of His benevolence, yet there is an ebbing and flowing. Sometimes the tide is low, and at others high.

There is a lesson here if we will but learn it. I have already said that many naturally think, "This truth is not for me, for I have nothing to give." Yet it is on this point that God's ways give us instruction. He bids us fill well the reservoir of grace and gift within. The duty of weekly storing was pressed on the Corinthians. Paul knew that if they saved properly, they would give effectively and readily. Saving is an art. It has been much cultivated during the past thirty years. The working classes have immense sums in the savings-banks of the country. It is an art which is only brought to perfection by great attention to details. One of the cleverest of our statesmen, the late Mr. Fawcett, invented the slip



of paper with twelve squares for twelve postage-stamps, so that it might be easy to save pennies. That is all that is needed in God's exchequer in order that we may learn to save well for His work. If people can save every three or six months efficiently, let them save so. Most find that Paul's method of weekly storing is best.\* It involves more trouble, like all good things. There is no royal road to Christian saving and giving. But if these weekly acts of storing be accompanied by thanksgiving to God, the man's face will shine, and, however slender his sacred purse, it will seldom be empty. The barrel of meal will not waste away; there will always be a handful of flour at the bottom of it.

#### VI. IT SHOULD BE EXERCISED *PRACTICALLY*.

There is an enormous waste of Christian resources. People who give to the poor without inquiry are often indulging a selfish sentiment, and do very much harm. In nothing does one's zeal need to be tempered more with discretion than in Christian giving. The joy of it is damped when we find that our hard-earned money has gone to the publican, or that it has simply prolonged the fit of idleness which prompted the appeal. If wasted food, drink, and gifts, and money lost

\* The ideal, however, is only reached when we give *daily*.

through speculation, could be reclaimed and well spent, England would be a different place in less than a year.

We need, indeed, originality in giving. There may be too much following of one type. But for the most part we are safe, and more than safe, in giving to our own great societies. There are institutions which appeal to all hearts—the Bible Society, the Tract Society, and the great Home and Foreign Missionary Societies, and the hospitals, all of which might enlarge their great usefulness if Christian beneficence could be raised to high-water mark. Information about them is necessary to inspiration and enthusiasm.

VII. THIS VIRTUE SHOULD BE EXERCISED  
*OPENLY.*

This may seem at variance with our Lord's teaching, viz. that we should not do our righteousness to be seen of men. What He meant was, that none of our religious acts were to have this as their motive-power. If that were their motive, they would at once lose their religious character. The man prays in public ; but if he does it to be seen of men, it ceases to be prayer. The gift becomes payment. The praise degenerates into performance. The public worship is corrupted into custom.

Yet all our religious acts have both a public and a private side. It is so with Christian giving. That has its private side. There are silent and unspoken deeds which would lose their fragrance if they were known. Delicate handling is very necessary if the gift is to be appreciated. But that is not so with the general giving of the Christian Church. And certainly, however much we may seek to cover up our gifts, they cannot be hid. It looks as though the poor widow was compelled to put down her farthing in the sight of all. Yet it was that farthing which our Lord commended. He dragged it to the light, that it might receive His open approval. Let the child's penny be known; let it be praised; let it be received; let all the deacons and treasurers and ministers be there to accept it: for gifts like this our Lord approves. And let it be acknowledged. There are cases, it is true, where this cannot be done, as in one united collection, though even there the copper is seen and approved by our Lord. But on the whole we shall find ourselves benefited by encouragement. Public prayer assists private supplication; public praise inspires private thanksgiving; public faith helps private belief; and public beneficence gives a great impulse to personal generosity. Let your

light shine. Don't give in order to be seen of men. But don't by your secrecy let others suppose that you are not giving.

VIII. LET THIS VIRTUE BE EXERCISED  
*LOVINGLY.*

God deliver us from the hard hand and the harder heart! Fruit on a Christmas-tree grows stale if it hangs too long. Gifts that do not come spontaneously from the man have little grace or beauty about them.

The inspiration for the exercise of all the Christian graces is to be found in God's love. The nearer we are to the cross, the nearer we shall be to the source of all power. God is the great Giver; God is the continual Giver. But, oh, what a wonderful benevolence is His! He gave His only Son to be our Saviour. A living union with that Saviour will make us like God.

I see the Christian, and ask, "What has he received?" For this is the measure of what he will give. He stands groaning beneath a burden of evil, but, gazing at the cross, he loses the heavy load; he has release and pardon. I see him fight with Apollyon, and as he reaches out his right hand for the sword of the Spirit, the arch-fiend spreads his black wings and flies. He has obtained triumph over the power of sin. I see

him gazing mournfully on the chill waters of Jordan ; but an everlasting arm upholds him, and an eternal love opens wide the gate to inconceivable bliss. He has gained heaven. Now I look at the Christian, and I say, " Christian, do you feel this weight of glory, and believe that these are great spiritual realities ? " And in reply to the question, I hear him sing—

" Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small ;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

XVI.

THE GOOD TEACHER.



## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE GOOD TEACHER.

THERE are strange proclivities in every human being, which seem to point out the work for which each is most fitted. Thus a child will sometimes show a mechanical taste, which apparently enables him to become an engineer. Or among our daughters, one is domestic, and another takes to books.

We believe that all things are governed by God; yet we sometimes fail to see in these special likes and dislikes the leading of His Providence. But they often show us which way we should ourselves go, and which way we should lead those over whose destinies we have an influence. There is a fitness between the work and the worker, and this fitness is often a matter of Divine prearrangement. We can, of course, thwart the Divine purpose, and mar the Divine plan, by our wilfulness. But none the less is there



a plan about all the manifold work which has to be done in our world. And this is especially so with that kind of labour which has to do with the minds and hearts of men. Of such work we may say what was said of the priesthood, "No man taketh this honour unto himself." He is appointed to it by God. And it is this fact which gives great seriousness to the teaching of Divine Truth. We may not take it up or let it alone according to our own fancies.

All are more or less teachers of others, and therefore all are more or less interested in learning how to be good teachers. We may not be professionally engaged either in the Day or Sunday school, but every man is a fountain either of error or of truth. What we really hold and believe is being insinuated into other minds. No one can escape this responsibility. Nor can we say with any truth that it does not matter what we believe, for no one is alone in the world. No, you cannot be solitary; you are touching society at some point every day you live. The influence of each of us is diffused through social life. What we are, hold, believe, wish, hope, and long after in our inner soul, all this is telling upon those who come into touch with us. Parents are powerful teachers of their children, and mothers

are specially so, in the earliest years of their children's life. And all those sweet relations which hold us together in our homes are so many mystic ties which bind mind to mind. The young man in business teaches his fellow-workers. He is exercising a mental and moral influence upon them all day, and sometimes all the more powerfully when they try to resist it. The old man is teaching, for by his life of unfaltering faith and hope he is bidding his younger comrades carry the flag nearer the place of victory. One of the things for which Rome is noted is its many fountains, which summer and winter alike are always pouring forth sparkling and lovely streams of purest water. So it should be with our life in great cities ; there should be moral and spiritual fountains of the streams of life which come from God Himself. Thus the thirsty minds of men would be truly refreshed.

What are the requisites which make a good teacher of Divine Truth ?

#### I. A DEEP SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY TO GOD.

There must be a sense of the Divine call. Gift and opportunity are the indications of a Divine vocation. The call often comes before we are ready to obey it. At first we only suspect the possession of the faculty ; and then some friend

perhaps suggests that we should exercise it. By obedience and practice the call becomes clear. Men wrap up the talent in a napkin, or, in other words, they recline at home, indolent, and then they say that they do not perceive a call to teach. It is a common case, and it is one against which our Lord has solemnly warned us in His parable: We must try—and fail; then try—and fail again; then try—and succeed a little; and we may then hope to be convinced that the Lord has called us. Young Samuel had to hear a sound three times before he could be assured that he was being addressed by God.

Jeremiah assumed the *rôle* which is often taken up by the modern Christian when he said, "Alas, Lord, I am only a child." It is only by trying that we can convince ourselves and others that we are summoned by God to this great work. There are some who are, or ought to be, miserable, because they have never made the trial which would have proved to them what their religious mission was to be. Hence the rust is growing over them, and they are slow to believe, and they are heavy in their prayers. May this unhappiness last and increase, till they are either goaded or drawn into some service for humanity!

Let us assume that the work has been begun.

A sense of responsibility will clothe the worker with dignity, joy, and power.

A mysterious change sometimes comes over the face of a youth when he first enters on business life; he loses the mere boyish look, and has that of the incipient man. How is it? It is because some duty has been placed on his shoulders, and he has thus been made to feel the seriousness of life. He is putting away childish things, and is becoming a man. He has lost some of the hilarity of the schoolboy, but he has gained that undefinable joy which belongs to manhood. Some will tell you that they long to go to school again, but they would not talk such nonsense if there were any chance of taking them at their word. And when we are clothed with the responsibilities of workers for Christ, we do not want to become mere learners again. Work brings real happiness; not indolence, nor innocence, nor dreaming. Cowards are often suffering from their nerves. Away with childish notions of religion! It is the very reverse of hardship that we should be asked to enter the service of God, and into that inner circle of work which is occupied by those who teach His Word. Worry kills; not duty. Neglect rusts the soul; not service. Let the lazy ones whine, cry, and criticize, and, sitting in the back

seats, weep for their long clothes again, and for their nurse and their milk-jug. Let our ambition lead us to the hottest places of the fight against error and ignorance. Christ's trumpet is heard above all our little labour: "Be not weary in well doing: for in due season ye shall reap, if ye faint not."

Besides which, there is nothing like obedience to God for giving steadfastness and strength to the mind. God makes no mistakes about us. He asks us to do something in this our short life for His glory; and when we do it we find rest, not when we evade duty. It is said that Havelock, when a boy, was forgotten by his father, who had told him to wait on London Bridge till he returned; and there at eventide the little hero was found standing where he had been put. "Be ye steadfast, immovable."

Great men like Paul and Martin Luther were able to endure, because they knew that they had the call of God. Obscure characters partake of their greatness when they are moved by the same inspiration. Why not? Inspiration is not private, though it is intensely personal. God moves in all, as surely as the vital sap reaches the last tremulous leaf of the tree. He who commands the sun to shine, also gives the glow-worm

its power to sparkle in the dark. It is not the work which makes a man great, but a sense of God. And God is with and in every honest, earnest worker. Humble men are ennobled ; they learn the secret of a Divine plan ; they are recognized as co-workers with God ; there is an immortal heat, light, and glory which first radiated out from the Divine essence, and which embodied itself in their ministry. These constitute the thrones of sacred influence to which we are summoned, and from them we may speak both law and love to the vast nations who wait to be taught the Divine will.

## II. FAITH IN THE POSSIBILITIES OF HUMAN NATURE.

This is necessary to the making of a good teacher. Luther's schoolmaster greeted his scholars every morning by taking off his hat. We ought to take off our hat to human nature. As soon as we find ourselves despising the poor, or neglecting childhood, we may conclude that some of God's Good Spirit has departed from our hearts.

For among the things which we can, as it were, see, the soul of man is the most wonderful. God's nature can be perceived by our spiritual faculties alone but man we can behold. Man's

achievements are everywhere around us. His power, brought to bear on the material with which nature has furnished him, has formed and fashioned the great social fabric in which we at present move. It has been built up by the prodigious efforts of our race in the past, and we are inheritors of a splendid estate whose wealth it is impossible to compute. Look round and see what man has done, so that you may know what a strange being you are dealing with when you propose to become his moral and spiritual guide.

Besides which, the faculties of the soul are in themselves great marvels, and they excite our wonder the more we think of them. Take these simple phrases: "I will," "I feel," "I ought." There are wonderful capacities lying dormant in the being who can say those words. These faculties the teacher proposes to awaken either to good or evil. We seem at times strangely insensible to the havoc which may be worked in a moral nature by the carelessness of the guardians of the soul. Parents who shrink back at the thought of or approach of pain when it comes near their dear ones, are able to behold with equanimity the gradual dissolution of all that builds up lasting character. Even professors of some branch of learning will sometimes construct

an intellectual theory with the utmost pains for the delight of their scholars, and at the same moment pull down their faith with a sneer. It were better to play with lightning than to tamper with these springs of all that is strong, Godlike, and noble in the spirit of man.

We see the beginning of these faculties, but we ought to try and forecast the issues of their workings. What is the end? There is an infinite progress before men who will be true to their nature and opportunities. Each man is a traveller upwards. At first his progress is slow and painful; he emerges with difficulty from the infantile stage, and only gradually comes to perfect manhood in Christ. But as we watch we see that he is destined for the skies. Not here—however great may be his achievements—is to be found his destined end or goal; but there, amid splendid intelligences whose transcendent powers surpass our loftiest thought, whose love to God is one perpetual joy, and whose golden harps of praise are always swept by the sensitive fingers of spiritual affection; there we are to see man come to his majority, and there we are to keep with him the grand birthday of his soul.

The person, then, who trifles with souls is worse than a murderer; for the latter only bruises and



destroys the body, while the former breaks down, as far as he can, all these great capacities which render the human being a fit resident of heaven and a chosen companion of God Himself. Such a man can never become a good teacher. He may become a devil, alluring the innocent and ignorant to their destruction ; a Mephistopheles, the boon and pleasure-loving comrade of youth ; a Cynic pouring scorn on goodness and deriding every generous impulse of the heart ; fair to gaze upon as the iceberg, but cold to freezing-point, and crushing many a glorious argosy of hope into fathomless depths of despair ! Let us banish this sardonic spirit from our literature, keep it from our schools and colleges, frown upon it when it curls the lips of our young men, and stamp it out from the amusements of the people.

Faith in human nature is foreign to much of the ridicule which draws crowds to the theatres, and which commands a large circulation for some modern novels. People who amuse to live rarely cut deep. Dramatists who have become immortal have been teachers, and not comedians. Corney Grain might have been a teacher if he had not been so exclusively amusing. Shakespeare wrote with his own life-blood, or he would have been a dim shadow to us now. Real teachers must

perforce be also believers. They are not daunted by what they see. Or, rather, they see below the surface; they perceive the hidden germ of possibility in each person. Tragedy lies everywhere about them. The desert, with its low brushwood of ignorance, its sandy wastes of error, and its black and stagnant pools of sin, fills the reformer with disgust and despair; but the Christian remembers that he is a follower of Him who came to seek and to save the lost. These know nothing of despair. The wilderness has oft been transformed into the very garden of the Lord, and they believe that this miracle can be wrought by the selfsame spiritual forces when they operate in the work to which they may be called.

### III. A DILIGENT STUDY OF THE TRUTH.

This is absolutely indispensable to the effectiveness of teaching. Some seem to think that they can safely talk any nonsense, or that they can as safely repeat a few phrases culled from a particular school of piety, and that this will suffice to produce the spiritual effects which they desire. How long shall we be in learning that religion is a life? It is the life of God reproduced in the soul of man, as far as the infinite can be implanted in the finite. And that this is so may be in part seen from the structure of the Bible, which is not a

well-constructed creed, but a record of the unfolded history and character of God. It is the vehicle in which are stored up for us the thoughts of God, and from which we are to draw out those thoughts for the benefit of our own souls and of those over whom we have an influence. The Word of God is lived out before us in those pages, partially in Old Testament times, and fully and completely in the character and work of Jesus Christ. And it is the business of the teacher to transfer that Word from the cold page to the warm and sentient hearts of those with whom he has to do; and to see that truth gain victories over the passions, lusts, and selfishness of men is the highest joy which he could have. The triumph of truth; this is the wages which alone can reward him. He has no greater joy than to see his children walk in the truth. Every worker has some end in view, and this is the Christian's goal: the triumph of God's Word in the hearts of men.

Clearly, then, the teacher is not himself supreme. There is an appeal from him to the facts which he has to bring forth from other sources than his own consciousness or experience. It is so with the masters of science, art, politics, and commerce. There is a body of facts or laws which it is their function to set forth and to interpret. If it were

otherwise, they would be trying to make bricks, not only without straw, but without clay. Nature is the court of appeal for the student and teacher of science; harmony, form, and colour preside over all workers in art; history teaches the statesman, and economic laws ultimately mould all trade transactions. And the Bible—and especially that part of it which unfolds the thought and life of Christ—is the storehouse whence the expositor of religion has to bring treasures new and old.

Why is this? Because the Bible is the great record of God's revelation of Himself to mankind. Apart from the Holy Scriptures, we should know very little of God. His existence, indeed, is known through nature, and His moral law is communicated in part by conscience, but in the Scripture we read the unfolding story of Redemption. The will and character of God overflow in Christ, and ~~they~~ are summed up in His life, death, resurrection, and ascension. But in order to know Christ we must have the Book; in order to be men of Christ—Christians—we must be also men of the Book. For, apart from the New Testament, we should know absolutely nothing of Him. It is there that His life is written, and it is there that His death is both recorded and explained; so that Gospels and Epistles are alike necessary for

the scholars of Christ. And in like manner the Old Testament must have a place in our study, for there we see how an elect nation was fashioned so that the world might be in due time ready to receive the Universal Light.

The school of Christ is held in the open air; scholars and teachers wander by the side of the river of the Water of Life; there they feel the grateful shadow of those trees whose leaves are for the healing of the nations; and Christ Himself, by His Spirit, comes to open to them His will and to make them sharers of His love. But this open-air religion cannot be understood by some; they want to have something more tangible and local. And therefore, on our way to the school of Christ, we find ourselves invited to enter into many classrooms, where it is said we shall receive the explanations which are necessary for our ignorant minds.

*The infallible class-room* promises that in its precincts we shall know no doubt, and yet we find that its atmosphere is stifling and its range very narrow. There is no space there for growth; whereas the Bible is so constructed that its intelligent students must necessarily develop their spiritual faculties in the very process of trying to unravel its meaning.

Close by is the *priestly class-room*. On entrance there you must leave behind your right of private judgment; in other words, your manhood. In your exercise of personal reason you will make mistakes, but these will be trivial in comparison with those gigantic superstitions which priests have foisted on the Scriptures. God alone is infallible, and it is only a piece of ecclesiastical quackery to profess that any of His creatures can be clothed with this Divine attribute. The Bible is an open page for every honest mind; not a garden fenced round by priestly palisades, and preserved for the exclusive walks of a favoured few.

Nor must we be enticed into the *mystical class-room*. A theory of the Christian life is first built up especially from the deep and mystical sayings of our Lord, of Paul, and of John; and then passages from the Old and New Testaments are twisted and tortured till they fit in with a foregone conclusion. The reverse method requires much patience; namely, to see what the Bible originally means, and then to construct our theories after. The edelweiss of mystical love to Christ is hard to get, and many who have been too venturesome have slipped over into the deeps of irresponsibility and perfectionism. It is not every one who has such a sure foothold on these uplands as

Ruysbroeck, Boehmen, Tauler, Madame Guyon, and William Law. The truths of Scripture and the facts of human life should govern our figures of speech wherever they are culled, and we should not allow hyperbolical language relating to the death and resurrection of Christ, or love-passages from the Canticles, or Eastern illustrations as to the vine, to take us beyond our depth. And if we allow it, and find ourselves in the swift currents of a new and delightful spiritual experience, let us remember that the waters are to *swim* in. Put out strong strokes! We are swimmers; not floats.

The Anglo-Saxon reader is rather prone to frequent the *prose class-room*. He knows little of poetry; is incapable of seizing the suggestions and nuances of imagination. He insists on the visibility of the invisible; he is sure that the kingdom is here and there; and he is ready to draw up a chronological list of facts and prophecies which, on further investigation, he will find have no relation to space and time.

*The tit-bit class-room* is often crowded. Its walls are made of mosaic, and are adorned with framed passages from the Bible. Each student possesses a string of pearls. For devotional purposes its work is very useful, and it is deservedly frequented by Christians of all creeds. But its

method can never be a substitute for the downright study of Christian doctrine. It feeds the emotional life too exclusively, and tends to produce lop-sided disciples. The city of God lieth four-square—emotional, rational, intuitional, and practical.

Round about the *rationalistic class-room* you see men and women with high foreheads and intelligent looks. Few enter there without a preconception that nothing supernatural is credible. Each is armed with a sharp penknife of criticism, with which all passages are excised which are interfused with the miraculous. As the process goes on, we may expect to have left to us no more than a few loose leaves of the old Book.

Attached to this by a corridor is the *pedantic class-room*. There learners are taught that they have interpreted a psalm when they have dated it, and that they have understood a prophecy when they have put it into its historical setting. The name of the architect and the year of his work are instructive, but the eternal edifice of truth is always greater than the shadows of time which play upon its roof and walls.

Lines of study must be various; and they should all converge on Christ, who is in verity the Word of God. The Bible itself is used by Christ; it is deferred to by Him, and it is also judged by



Him. For His life is a rebuke to the imperfections which mark all the Old Testament saints; and His teaching is sometimes a correction of what had been received as truth before His time, and sometimes an amplification of sayings which could only find their fulfilment in His own final word. The right of private judgment is the duty of sitting at the Master's feet, that we may learn of Him. And in our search we need His *life* and *death* as the key to unlock all the doors of the treasure-house.

How shall we describe this study?

It should be *diligent*. The Book cannot be understood all at once. It is composed of a long series of revelations, and its details can only be mastered by patience on our part. Its unity must find an interpretation in the growing experience of the sanctified heart. If it tells of a Life, then Christ must be lived in us; so that face may answer to face as in a mirror. All this requires time; for men ripen less quickly than the orchard.

*Comparative study* is necessary. Each sentence has to be looked at in connection with what goes before and after it. This is a mere commonplace, but it is very much neglected by Bible readers. Each book needs to be compared with those other books within and without the Canon which were written at the same time. When an

old stained-glass window is broken, an effort is made to restore the pattern, so that not only the colouring, but the plan may come to light again. Many are satisfied to put the pieces into a kaleidoscope, where doubtless the eye is pleased, but where no outline of truth can be discerned.

*Historical study* is very important. The original meaning is always the guiding one ; and whatever use we make of passages for the purposes of Christian illustration, we should always be careful to discover and to give out the first and primary intention of the passage. Otherwise the Bible becomes a very artificial book, and at length a very shadowy, dreamy, and unpractical one. It is, therefore, a great advantage to know something of Eastern ways, and to be able to go back to the times and conditions which surrounded these Scriptures when they came fresh from the lips of inspired men.

*The devotional use* of the Bible is the most important of all. And for this reason : that the Holy Spirit uses the Bible to operate on the hearts of men now. The Book brings us to God. The stairway of prayer has been built by God's mercy, so that the feet of our thoughts may be able to climb up to the presence of the Eternal when we peruse His message to us. This is all the more

necessary to remember when, as in the case of so many, the reading of the Bible has to be vicarious. It is easier to read for others than it is to peruse these sacred writings for our own health's sake. A commentary is often most necessary; but it must not be a substitute for our own reading and meditation and prayer. These Biblical materials are intended to be an ark, sheltering souls from the storms of life; and if we are builders and carpenters of it, we must be careful to take refuge there ourselves. What became of Noah's carpenters? What becomes of some expositors of the Word to-day?

What could be a nobler task than that which is committed to our hands? It is work worthy of the lofty intelligences who people the heavenly world; nay! it is labour which the Son of God Himself has voluntarily undertaken; for was not Jesus the Divine Teacher? Let us up, then, and put fresh oil into our lamps! Let us lift high the torch of truth, so that all may know that the Bridegroom of humanity hastens on to the everlasting banquet of life and love which He has come to prepare for His redeemed Bride.

XVII.  
THE GOOD CITIZEN.



## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE GOOD CITIZEN.

THOSE who are afraid of mixing politics with religion, will have to shut up the Old Testament Scriptures ; for these are, in many parts, full of civic teaching. They try to show how people are to become good citizens, both in their relation to God and man ; and this is the end of all sound political education. We cannot do better than turn back, therefore, to hear what a great "ethical and religious teacher" had to say to Judah, when a disastrous overthrow was threatening her sacred city. Micah was emphatically a social reformer ; and though he does not show the same acquaintance with so-called "political" events as did Isaiah, yet he goes down to the roots of all such movements, and shows the causal connection between social wrong and national calamity. He was the spokesman for the poor ; and he pointed

out, not only their sufferings, but the moral remedies by which these were to be removed.

The rich oppressed the poor ; wretchedness was rife, especially among the tillers of the soil ; bribery, which was common, contaminated the very foundations of justice ; drunkenness, immorality, idolatry, and superstition were rolling, like a dark and turbid tide, through the country. The overthrow of the nation was at hand ; and soon the departing exiles would be taking a sad farewell of the fields and cities which they loved better than life.

Some thought that these terrible calamities would be prevented if priest and people would only be more attentive to the outward sacrifices of the sanctuary. This they affirmed would appease God ; and then the Almighty, pleased with the service thus rendered, would intervene on their behalf. And at this point we have one of the most important utterances of the Old Testament,—one which shows that religion and righteousness were only two names for the same thing : “ *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good ; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God ?* ” (Micah vi. 8.)

These words contain the quintessence of good citizenship. Men and women who want to render

their duties to the State, could not do better than ponder, in church and out of it, these thrilling and lofty appeals. They lift us at once above the petty and personal, and tend to fill our little lives with the inspiration of Divine and Eternal principles.

#### I. GOODNESS IS RELIGION.

It is not the whole of religion. It is not the process of religion. But, rightly understood, it is the product of religion. It is not the root, but it is the fruit. We are not to forget that the atonement is an essential part of religion. But neither are we to forget that the atonement is a means of restoring goodness to the soul and to society. And we are not so to dwell upon the means as to forget the end.

It was the great revelation of the Old Testament that righteousness was religion. By righteousness was meant likeness to a God who did justly, and whose whole nature was one of mercy. And we who live in the New Testament times need to recur over and over again to this same conception of what it is that God really requires of us.

Goodness is Godliness. As God is, so we are to be. As Christ was, so are we to become; loving mercy, pursuing justice, showing ourselves generous, and cultivating benevolence of disposition • to all, as we have opportunity.



This goodness has a physical basis. We speak, and not without reason, of "good circumstances." These are not necessarily rich ones ; for these, as we know, may be a great curse to those who are surrounded by them. But they are at least those which will enable men to keep a healthy mind in a healthy body. And as far as legislation has an influence on these surroundings, we may speak of legislation as being good or bad. It leads to good homesteads, to a fair wage for work done, to a reasonable amount of time being left to the worker for leisure and recreation ; it prevents what is called sweating ; it guards women and children from selling their hours too dearly ; it makes the employer careful that he does not risk the lives of his working people in the pursuit of his trade ; it sees that the son of the soil gets enough to eat ; it removes those barriers to wholesome living which exist in our large cities in the shape of licensed temptations, and of insanitary dwellings. These are some of the first elements of religious legislation. And without these elements all our boasted civilization is but a sham. There can be no goodness in this world which is merely built in the air ; it must have a substantial basis in the physical well-being of man's nature. A saved man is first of all a

healthy man ; a saved society is first of all a healthy one.

But all these things are to be sought by moral means. It is not a good thing to get all this done at the expense of justice and of liberty. Man is a moral being. And in all that appertains to his material well-being we have to consider whether the claims of justice between man and man and between God and man have or have not been met. It is not, therefore, only the physical end which we have to consider ; for if that were all, then we might say that the end justifies the means. But this is never the case with man. He can only be made happy in as far as the claims of justice are ascertained and met. It will not suffice to say that Christianity is preached by the State ; we have to consider whether the means used for propagating the gospel are in accordance with the great principles which are promulgated by the Divine Founder of our religion. And if we find that Christ would not employ force to push forward His kingdom, then all theories as to the union of Church and State at once fall to the ground. They are not allowable ; they may have belonged to a previous dispensation, where the full righteousness of God was not revealed. But by Christians they will have to be laid aside ; so

that the harder task of persuading men and teaching children by moral means may be pursued. A religious State is, therefore, not one where the ministers of religion are *ex officio* in her Parliament, but where the principles of Christ are strictly adhered to in all her public acts. The establishment of religion is, indeed, an advance upon times when there was none to establish; but it is clearly opposed to the spirit of Jesus Christ, whose kingdom can only be extended by love. A good man is he who does good deeds; and a good State is that where good deeds are done by godly means. The end is good and the instrument also. And goodness is religion. Without goodness there is no religion, but only the pretence of it.

All goodness is essentially personal, and not institutional. It can be traced back to individual character; and it has no other real abiding place. Only in a figurative sense can we speak of a good institution; only in an un-moral sense can we affirm that fabrics and endowments are good. Whether, therefore, the reader is in favour of or opposed to an establishment of religion hardly matters in the present discussion; for in either case he has to ask himself whether he is a good citizen, in the sense of being inspired by the

loftiest motives, and of engaging in the most abiding service. In a thoughtful essay in "*Lux Mundi*," on Christianity and Politics, there is this sentence, describing the function of the State: "Firstly, it has to use force, and, therefore, its appeal to the higher motive is weakened. Secondly, it can only secure a minimum of morality, shifting with the general morality of the community."\* Again, the same writer says that there are many who believe "that the life of the Church would be more real, more pure, more governed by the highest motives, if she were freed from all direct connection with the State."†

Without therefore entering on the thorny discussion of the relations of Church and State, it is agreed by all that what we really want is an aggregate of persons whose lives are "real," "pure," and "governed by the highest motives." It must be confessed that we are all very clever in eluding this point; and we do so by pointing to excellences which belong to ancestors or institutions, whose virtues we have not had a part in producing. The ancestor may have been "pious," the institution "sacred" and "venerable;" but as the Church is made up of the persons who are living at the present hour, the real question is as

\* "*Lux Mundi*," p. 444, 10th edit.

† *Ibid.*

to what spiritual character belongs to these. The pride of the Catholic or Episcopalian that he belongs to a venerable community, and the boast of the Nonconformist that his spiritual predecessors bled for freedom's cause,—both these go for nothing, unless the actions of to-day are marked by the primal elements of the moral life. The revival of the beautiful in our outward forms of worship is comforting and helpful on the manward side of religion; but in itself, as not being possessed necessarily of moral qualities, it is not the essential thing which God requires. And, therefore, we must look in other and practical directions for those virtues which make the nation religious. The nation is religious when its citizens are so; and religion is goodness. Institutionally the State may be full of ecclesiastical organization, and the people as ignorant of spiritual realities as the heathen. The stuffed bird cannot sing; nor will a nation truly praise God when its only boast is that the "fabric" of Christian ordinances is in good repair. Before we can determine whether real religion exists, we must make search into its commerce, its policies, its home-life, and the ordinary habits of all classes of the community. A profession, national or individual, which dispenses with "justice and mercy," is hypocrisy.

## II. GOODNESS IS KNOWABLE.

It is often complained about religion that it is so mysterious that plain men cannot see or know it. And it must be admitted that there are sides of it which we can only get to understand after a great deal of prolonged thought. God Himself can only be partially known to us ; and then, too, by the heart's deep desires, by the intuitions of the affections, rather than by processes of reasoning.

Creeds are very difficult to understand and to master. They are the results of metaphysical operations which were once very interesting, but which have in a measure lost their interest to this generation. They seem to require experts for their unravelling, and are not suited for the people at large.

The spiritual side of religion, which relates us to God and to the eternal world, asks for faith on our part ; and this men are not at first willing to give. They postpone the assurance of forgiveness till a future day, and the doctrine of providence they are content to leave over to a further time of enlightenment.

But we can say to all these agnostics that there is a great advantage about Micah's religion ; viz. that it can be known and read of all men.

It can be understood by the "man in the street." In two ways religion is knowable.

1. *In personal character.* — This we know is the foundation of all that we are called upon to be and to do for Christ. We can all see and know what this means. Little children can detect goodness as certainly as they can smell the fragrance of the flowers, or be bewitched by the lovely strains of the organ. When a nation is putting its hands to the task of making a Parliament, that is the first thing which it has to consider. It is not by any means the *only* thing; but it is first in order of time. We cannot expect a set of bad men to make good laws. He who makes the bread of the land should have clean hands. We don't want men who are bankrupt in character to be put in any place of authority; and, while there is always room for repentance in every place, still we ought to make sure that the penitence is very sincere before we admit the open sinner either to the throne or to any one of the estates of the realm. It is true that we may be deceived; we may think that men are good when they are not: but that does not relieve us of a great and most important duty in all appointments we may make to positions of trust

and influence. And while it is said that religion is so mysterious that it is better to leave it alone ; our reply is, that character can be seen, and that it must be taken into account if we are to build up a holy Church and a strong State.

2. *In work, goodness is seen.*—There are certain general tendencies which make for the welfare of the community, and these are a sure indication of the presence of goodness. We have to perform a sum ; to add up the different items, and see what the total is. Does the work bring in its train happiness of a real nature, or does it involve misery ? Hence the necessity of studying history. Much of the Bible is history ; and our own land affords ample stuff for the testing of the work which has been done in the past.

Take the case of Joshua. Can we justify the wholesale extermination of the Canaanites in many of the cities which he took ? No ; in the light of our ampler knowledge we cannot. And yet, if the balance-sheet has to be drawn up, the Israelites would certainly not have grudged him a memorial ; for they would have felt that on the whole his work was good, and therefore religious.

Take the case of our own Cromwell. Can we justify his sanguinary work in Ireland ? Not if



we love mercy and righteousness. But if we are to measure his character by the liberty which we enjoy now, and by the dread which he has put for ever in every tyrant's heart, we cannot withhold our tribute from him as one of the greatest of England's rulers. He will doubtless have his statue in due time; but meanwhile he needs it not, for a land full of freedom is the best and most enduring monument which he could possess.

### III. GOODNESS IS DO-ABLE.

I. *Religion seems too high for some of us.*—It seems so when we hear of creeds which we cannot understand, or of experiences into which we cannot enter. But we must remember that religion, if it is of the Old Testament kind, assures us that goodness is not a mere science, but that it is an *art*. It is something to be done. Something to be done in the right spirit; but still, something to be *done*. And it often has to be done before we know the exact method of accomplishing it. It is by imitation and through inspiration, and not through learning a quantity of rules, that duties are performed. It is with us as with the child who is learning to walk or talk. The child does not understand the laws of motion nor what equilibrium is; but it simply

puts one foot before the other. The child talks before it knows the laws of speech. Thus it is with religion. It is something which we have to do in the fear of the Lord. It is the common task to be performed, the home to be made cheerful, the business to be conducted on righteous principles, the nation to be filled with the object lessons of justice and liberty.

2. *We want things actually done in our nation.*—Talk is necessary, so also are public meetings, discussions, long deliberations, the give-and-take processes, so that all parties may in a measure be consulted; but then we need the Bill turned into an *Act*.

3. *Talk is not an end in itself.*—You have stopped perhaps to hear a cheapjack, and you have been astonished at the amount of talk he can get through. Yet even he has a point to which he comes. He wants to sell his goods. But in public life we are often far behind the cheapjack. We spend a great amount of ingenuity as to how not to do things. And we give plenty of room to our humorous paper, which in its "Essence of Parliament" often winds up with these significant words—"Business done—None."

4. *The vote is a trust.*—It means that helpless people put their confidence in those who are to

act in their behalf ; and that they ask them to do something to deliver them from manifold dangers and disabilities. Gradually the conscience of the people is being enlightened on this point, though there is much leeway to make up in our education. It used to be regarded as an article of commerce to be sold ; and is so regarded, I fear, by many now. Still more subtle and dangerous, is the idea that it is a piece of private property which we may use as we like. Some even think that there is a kind of merit in not using it at all. But somewhere I have read of a servant who hid his lord's talent in the earth ; and who earned his lord's anger on account of the action. If there are things that need to be done, it is not by leaving our own act undone that we show that we are imbued with the spirit of Christianity. No ! thousands will rise up to call us blessed if we do our best as stewards of the Most High.

#### IV. GOODNESS IS REQUIRED BY GOD.

Goodness is, as we have seen, partly in character, and partly in actual work. God requires both kinds. It is not enough for us in choosing a servant, to say that he is a good man ; but we have to inquire whether he will turn out good work. There is a certain kind of goodness which does not insure that our food shall be well cooked,

or that our houses shall be well built, or that our boots shall keep out the water, or that our laws shall be conducive to the welfare of the people at large.

We have accordingly to define what we mean by goodness in regard to any private or public action, and then we can better determine whether it is acceptable to God or not. Micah defined it as containing justice, mercy, and humility. We sometimes find great difficulty in making up our minds as to what is just, merciful, and humble. Hence there have to be innumerable arguments in the papers, in Parliament, and on public platforms as to what these qualities are. We are always in a ferment, and always shall be. We are always in the twilight about some question; for the name "question" shows that it is still a perplexity to us. We do not, however, argue with those who deny that goodness is paramount. That is the common ground of all who love their country truly. And it is a part of our discipline to find out what things are just and generous, and what movements tend to the general welfare of the land which is loved by all parties in the State. And when this is ascertained, we may indulge the inspiring thought that such activities are religion, if only they are done

- in obedience to God.

How beautiful then is religion ! It is not something up in the clouds, which we cannot reach. It is not the construction of elaborate creeds, nor the singing of soft and lovely strains of music, nor the building of grand edifices, nor the sustentation of complicated societies for doing all sorts of useful things. These are very often the manifestations of religion, and sometimes the means of sustaining it ; but religion itself is something within the reach of all. It is the doing of just and generous things for God and out of love to Christ. *Obedience from Godly motives is religion.*

Still, perhaps you think that the Christian life is rather hard ; and so it is. It is very difficult to find out what God has showed us, and the more difficult to do so when men, equally good, take such different views of the same question. Still, this is a part of that schooling to which we are to submit ourselves. Suppose every man could be told by an authoritative voice how to vote at an election ! That would at once rob him of his manhood ; and, by taking away his responsibility, it would take away his best powers. No, God shows us what is good in such a way that we have to exercise our faculties to read what He says. There is no infallible guidance as to particulars. But there is clear teaching as to principles. In

the application of those principles we find ourselves engaged in what God considers acceptable to Him. If we choose to remain ignorant, and to act in ignorance, He will forgive us because of our darkness; but He will not accept our offering. There is only one criterion of a complete sacrifice: it is that the work shall be good. It applies to the schoolboy and to the statesman; and no sincerity of motive can excuse servants for bad workmanship. If the euclid or grammar has been well learnt, if the Act of Parliament has made for the real welfare of the people, and without injustice in the methods used, then this is accepted of God. It goes straight up to heaven, and is recorded there as one of the religious acts which have been done on earth.

With "Party Politics" the Bible can have nothing to do, except when they involve moral distinctions; for it was written long before our parties were ever thought of, and it will exist long after all our present controversies are settled. But it brings before its tribunal men and women of all sections; and it reminds us that there is a practical side to the religion which we profess, one which we are apt to overlook. This is indeed one great advantage of a general election—that with one clean sweep it blots out for a time all

that is private, emotional, inward, and speculative in our religion, and fastens our thoughts on that which is practical and public. And the private and practical are no less linked together. We are all sent into this world to *do something good* ; and that is religion. Not the whole of it. But a very important part of it, and one which, if neglected, leaves no room for mere professions. We have then, through the tumults of public affairs, an opportunity of finding out whether our lives are being lived with a view to the happiness and righteousness of the nation in which we live, and of which we form a part. We are longing for justice, mercy, humility before God. We picture the England that has yet to be ; while we thank God for what it is ! Goodness is our ideal. The air is sweet ; the labour of the many is well remunerated ; the classes and masses are no longer sundered ; the cities are at last pleasant and wholesome places to live in ; religious people see at length that their privileges are meant for the whole community ; the policy of the country is, peace with all men and freedom for oppressed races !

When in our little lives we are pursuing something like the lines laid down by Micah, we are not far from the kingdom of heaven. Other and

inspiring influences will come at the same time into our lives—love to Christ as Saviour ; fellowship with His people ; experience of His Spirit's power ; lofty hopes born in us by sacred song and prayer : but meanwhile our feet will walk, our duties will be done, and in practical work we shall obey God.

THE END.









